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A special volume on Postcolonialism

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A special volume on Postcolonialism

The Present Volume is edited by
Chelva Kanaganayakam
Trinity College, Toronto, Canada

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Who Counts ? De-ciphering the Canon

BERNTH LINDFORS

In 1985 I introduced a simple arithmetical scheme for measuring the literary stature of writers from anglophone Africa both comparatively and diachronically. Since this elegant blunt instrument is not yet widely known, and since I now intend to extend its scope upto the end of 1991, it may be well for me to rehearse once again the ground rules governing the reduction of fine literary distinctions to the less subtle certainties of round numbers.

My objective was to provide verifiable answers to several looming but unresolved questions : Who are the major authors in anglophone Africa today ? How can the reputation of one be measured against the reputation of another in an objective manner so that the relative importance of each can be ascertained quickly, accurately and dispassionately, without the least trace of subjective bias ? How, in other words, can we determine scientifically who stands where in the pecking order established by the preferences and prejudices of public opinion ? How can we quantify qualitative discriminations ?

As one approach to these problems, I devised a Famous Authors' Reputation Test that records the frequency with which an author and his works are discussed in detail in print by literary scholars and critics. A score is thus arrived at that can be compared to the scores achieved from the same date base by other authors. Those who score highest can be said to have gained wider recognition than those who register a lower number of substantive citations. The Famous Authors' Reputation Test ensures that an author's fame will be assessed not intuitively or ecstatically but purely mathematically. Plain numbers will determine the final ranking.

The data base from which statistical information has been taken in this quest for objective analysis is the most comprehensive one I could lay my hands on - namely, my own bibliography *Black African Literature in English : A Guide to Information Sources* (Detroit : Gale. 1979), and its

two five-year supplements, *Black African Literature in English, 1977-1981* (New York : Africana, 1986) and *Black African Literature in English, 1982- 1986* (Oxford : Zell, 1989), to which I will now add the data from the latest five-year compilation *Black African Literature in English, 1987-1991* (London : Zell, 1995) - volumes which together attempt to list all the important critical books and articles (in whatever language) published on anglophone Black African literature from 1936 to 1991. The first volume (hereafter cited as BALE I), covering the earliest forty years of academic productivity, contains 3305 entries; the second (BALE II), covering five additional years, contains 2831 entries; the third (BALE III), covering another five years, contains 5689 entries; and the most recent five-year supplement (BALE IV) contains an impressive 8772 entries - a proportional increase testifying to the tremendous growth of critical interest in this literature in recent times. The expanded data base now consists of 20,734 books and articles produced over a 55-year period. This is not a small or inconsequential corpus of criticism.

But while these four volumes seek to be as comprehensive as possible, they remain to a degree selective: certain materials of marginal interest are deliberately omitted. For instance, brief reviews of books and of stage performances, political biographies of statesmen, and newspaper reports on some of the nonliterary activities of famous authors are excluded, but not review articles, biographical materials and newspaper items possessing some literary significance. No creative works - novels, stories, plays poems, anthologies - are recorded unless prefaced by a critical introduction. The intention throughout is to provide thorough coverage of major scholarly books and periodicals as well as selective coverage of other relevant sources of informed commentary.

In each volume the bibliographical corpus is divided into two parts, the first organized by genre or topic, the second by individual author. Annotations are appended to some entries, mostly to identify the authors with whom the article or book is primarily concerned. The general rule of thumb is to note all authors who receive at least a page or two of commentary. If many authors are mentioned but none is discussed at length, the annotation indicates that the work is a survey. "Et al."(and others) is used whenever a work briefly treats additional authors.

A concerted effort has been made to list each item in the cumulative bibliography only once and to provide numbered cross-references to it in all other sections to which the item belongs. For example, an article on Nigerian dram discussing J.P. Clark, Ola Rotimi and Wole Soyinka in some detail (i.e., devoting at least a page to examination of each writer) but treating other Nigerian dramatists in a cursory fashion (i.e., discussing them in less than a page each) would appear in the drama section in Part One with an annotation reading "Clark, Rotimi, Soyinka, et al." The number of that entry would then be included among the cross-references following the individual sections in Part Two listing books and articles devoted exclusively to Clark, Rotimi and Soyinka respectively. On the other hand, a specialized article on only one author - e.g., "Pidgin English in Soyinka's Plays" - would be recorded under Soyinka in Part Two with numbered cross-references appearing in the topical sections on "Drama" and "Language and Style" in Part one. So each author treated in the bibliography has special niche in Part Two where all the books and articles dealing with him or her alone are listed, after which numbered cross-references provide leads to all other items in the bibliography that offer substantive commentary on his or her work. A good many of these cross-references may yield no more than a few pages of sustained criticism, but certain of them - book chapters, lengthy monographs or doctoral dissertations focussing on only two or three writers, for instance -may provide much more exhaustive treatment of specific text than do some of the individual articles.

Nonetheless, in devising a scoring system of my Famous Authors' Reputation Test, I have decided to award three points for every discrete entry on an individual author and one point for every cross-reference. This seems to reflect the balance between the two categories more accurately than does a straight one for one system that would tend to inflate the scores of authors who are frequently cited but seldom examined with any care. An author who is known but never studied intensively may be a significant minor reference point in African literature, but it is unlikely that he commands the kind of respect that would earn him a measure of distinction. Literary critics and scholars tend to gravitate towards those writers whose works interest them the most. They do not waste too much time on second-rate talents.

What follows is a list of the fifteen writers who achieved a score of at least 500 on the Famous Authors' Reputation Test and then a list of

twenty-five others who achieved a score of at least 160. According to statistics gleaned from more than half a century of critical commentary, these forty names are those most consistently chosen as worthy of serious attention, the figures on the left constituting what could be called a High Canon and the figures on the right a Low Canon.

CHART ONE

But since such a list may be biased toward older writers who have been on the scene a long time, it may be interesting to look at the figures derived from the latest volume alone in order to see who among the younger writers has emerged as important in the eyes of scholars and critics in more recent years. Chart Two thus gives the scores for twenty writers who gained more than 150 points between 1987 and 1991 and then lists twenty- eight others who earned at least 70 points during the same period. Asterisks have been placed beside those names making the most striking short term gains. These are evidently the most upwardly mobile celebrities at the moment, but it remains to be seen whether they will have the kind of staying power that some of their numerically superior colleagues have already manifested.

CHART TWO

Since some reputations have waxed or waned overtime, I am presenting in Chart Three the breakdown of figures for the top scorers in BALE I, BALE II, and BALE III separately and then giving grand totals for each of the four categories on the score board. To this I am adding the figures for BALE IV separately and then cumulatively under New Grand Totals, and supplementing the original High Canon of fifteen names with those of nine up-and-coming neo-canonical or near-canonical figures of impressive statistical weight. As can be seen from the new numbers ranges in the final column at the bottom right, Head, Emecheta and Rotimi have already overtaken Awoonor as all time greats, but only Head has managed to break into the ranks of the High Canonicals (ie., those with over 500 points).

CHART THREE

The scoring method employed in the Famous Authors' Reputation Test works as follows : Entries (E) and Cross - References (CR) have been added together to produce a Raw Total (RT). Entries have been added together to produce a Raw Total (RT). Entries have been multiplied three times and then added to Cross References to produce a Weighted Total (WT),

which I regard as more reliable indicator or reputation than a simple Raw Total. The last column at the bottom right - the Grand Weighted Total (GWT) of BALEs I, II, III and IV - reveals where each author stood in relations to others in the pantheon of anglophone African literature by the end of 1991.

Next there is a diagram (Chart Four) that may help us to see the diachronic patterns more clearly. The connected dots show the position held by each author in the Weighted Total (WT) rankings in each volume as well as the position that author holds today in the Grand Weighted Total (GWT) rankings derived from the cumulated data in all four volumes. To give the chart more depth, and to show the great gains that have been made at various intervals by surging upstarts who had no visibility on the chart back in 1976, I have displayed places 16, 17 and 18 in the Grand Weighted Total, places occupied in BALE I by Onuora Nzekwu, T.M. Aluko and Taban lo Liyong respectively - authors who have suffered a decline in relative standing in the past fifteen years.

CHART FOUR

An author's rise or fall in reputation can be gauged by the trajectory produced by the linkings of his or here first four dots, with the fifth dot representing where in the grander scheme of things that author stands today in relation to all others past and present. It is clear, for example, that Achebe and Soyinka have always been at the very top; that Ngugi and Armah have made impressive gains in the past decade to solidify their hold on places 3 and 4; that Clark and Ekwensi have wobbled a bit but have made game comebacks in BALEs III and IV respectively, partly on the strength of substantial cross-reference numbers; that La Guma and Mphahlele have made modest gains; that Tutuola, Okigbo. Abrahams and Okara on the other hand have experienced moderate declines; that women writers - notably Head, Emecheta and Aidoo - have made striking advances of late; that Saro-Wiwa, the most meteoric new kid on the block, has suddenly made his way up from being an almost complete nonetity in BALEs I, II and III to occupying position number 5 in BALE IV and in position 20 on the all time list; that Okot and Brutus' and have experienced substantial instability, leaving them in a potentially precarious equilibrium; and that Awoonor, though suffering a precipitous recent drop, has retained sufficient residual numerical strength to remain, at least for now, in the top twenty on the new Grand Weighted Totals (GWT).

A second diagram (Chart Five), which ignores the five year fluctuations between 1976 and 1991 and only charts individual trajectories from beginning to end of this entire period, may enable us to isolate dominant trends in these diachronic patterns more readily. On this simplified chart it is plain to see whose reputation has risen, whose has fallen, and whose has held steady.

CHART FIVE

However, if we look more closely at Chart Four, taking into account the organization of entries in the data base, it is not difficult to explain some of the seismic ups and downs we see represented there. Entries under "Individual Authors" in Part Two of each volume of *Black African Literature in English* are divided into four categories : (1) Bibliography, (2) Biography and Autobiography, (3) Interviews, and (4) Criticism. If an author is newsworthy - that is, if he or she attracts a great deal of attention in the press or in periodicals as a result of notorious deeds (e.g., the winning of a prize, the losing of a freedom, the taking of a stand, the giving of a tribute, the initiation of a controversy, the ending of a life), there are likely to be numerous entries in the Biography and Autobiography subsection, each of which will garner the author three points in the Weighted Total as well as in the Grand Weighted Total , the same number of points that are awarded for a critical book or essay on the author's work. Thus, Wole Soyinka's Nobel Prize, coming at the end of 1986, was sufficient to catapult him well ahead of Chinua Achebe, with whom he had been running almost neck and neck in BALEs I and II. Indeed, had it been possible to list every newspaper article published on Soyinka's winning of this prize, the gap between Soyinka and Achebe, not mention all the rest of the anglophone African writing community, would have been much wider. Similarly, Ngugi's detention in 1978 and subsequent political activities both in Kenya and abroad; the deaths of Okot p'Bitek, Alex La Guma and Bessie Head; the return of Es'kia Mphahlele to South Africa in 1978; and the deportation trial of Dennis Brutus in 1982-83 added considerably to their individual WT scores.

In BALE IV the high scores for some of the newcomers can be traced to both literary and extra-literary factors. Festus Iyayi won a Commonwealth Writers' Prize in 1988, but he also made headlines when his political activities got him sacked from the University of Benin in 1987 and arrested and detained in 1988. Niyi Osundare was the recipient of four major literary

honors : an Association of Nigerian Authors Prize in 1990, the Noma Award in 1991, and the Commonwealth Poetry Prize twice - in 1986 and 1991; these successes led to many newspaper interviews and journalistic profiles of the author as well as to increased critical attention. And Ken Saro-Wiwa, who rose faster from obscurity than any other writer in anglophone Africa, was given extensive media coverage when his serialized comedy, *Basi and Company*, became one of the most popular television shows in Nigeria; in fact, Saro-Wiwa earned the great majority of his points from reportage and interviews in the Nigerian press. There were hardly any articles published on him outside Nigeria. He won his reputation almost entirely at home, not abroad.

Such biographically inflated figures do not necessarily detract from the statistical reliability of the Famous Authors' Reputation Test. Notoriety, after all, is part of what makes an author famous. But remarkable variations in an author's trajectory - especially the sudden ups we noted earlier - need to be studied carefully if we are to understand whether they are the consequence of increased public attention being given to the author's deeds or to his works. Some authors may be more notorious than they are respected. A relatively high GWT score in 1991 is not necessarily an irrevocable passport guaranteeing permanent entry into an anglophone African writers' Hall of Fame. Time marches on, and if a writer's works do not sufficiently interest or engage future generations of readers after that writer is gone, he or she will eventually lose relative standing, a fate that will be reflected in a downward trajectory on later charts.

A word also needs to be said about gross numbers. More significant than a writer's relative rank in the Famous Authors' Reputation Test is the total number of points he or she has accrued. Perhaps it would help to put this in visual terms, using the GWT figures for all four volumes as the basis of the following graph :

CHART SIX

The dramatic disparities between the front-running troika (Soyinka, Acheba, Ngugi) and the rest of the pack are now quite apparent. Indeed, it is unlikely that anyone will catch up to them in the near future, for at each five-year interval so far they have put greater distance between themselves and their followers. In any construction of a canon of anglophone African

writing, works by these three writers would have to rank high. Their reputations are very great and growing.

This is not to say that there is no hope for younger writers whose names do not yet appear on any of the charts. On the contrary several of them have made striking gains in the past ten years, and one may expect a handful of them to keep rising in the ranks. But the only way that they and others can continue to ascend or to hold their own in future tabulations is by regularly being the subject of critical scrutiny - that is, by frequently being written about. The Famous Authors' Reputation Test shows no mercy on writers whose works or lives do not attract commentary. The unexamined literary career is not worth much in a noisy marketplace of ideas. To be famous, to be reputable, to be deemed worthy of serious and sustained consideration, an author needs as much criticism as possible, year after year after year. Only those who pass this test of time - the test of persistent published interest in their art - will stand a chance of earning literary immortality.

And the progress of such pilgrims towards final canonization can be assessed as easily and accurately with statistics gleaned from a citation index as with any other divining instrument. Simple numbers may not tell us the whole truth and nothing but the truth but they can reveal something of the truth in an objective and unbiased fashion. Indeed, quantification may be the best possible method for dispassionately measuring and comparing literary reputations. To arrive at an honest, trustworthy, scientifically constructed canon, all we need to do is count and de-cipher the relevant numbers.

Professor of English
University of Texas
Austin, U.S.A.

CHART ONE

NEW GRAND WEIGHTED TOTALS (1936-1991)

1. Soyinka	5329	16. Emecheta	467
2. Achebe	4290	17. Rotimi	443
3. Ngugi	2710	18. Awoonor	415
4. Armah	1080	19. Aidoo	366
5. Clark	844	20. Saro-Wiwa	365
6. Ekwensi	784	21. Osofisan	361
7. Tutuola	778	22. Farah	341
8. Head	617	23. Amadi	286
9. Mphahlele	607	24. Omotoso	277
10. Okigbo	586	25. Nwapa	275
11. La Guma	577	26. Osundare	238
12. Okot	575	27. Liyong	237
13. Brutus	571	28. Equiano	235
14. Abrahams	563	Marechera	
15. Okara	530	30. Rive	223
		31. Aluko	211
		32. Chinweizu	208
		Iyayi	
		Serote	
		35. Plaatje	199
		36. Mazrui	187
		37. Nkosi	182
		38. Ike	173
		39. Mtshali	167
		Okpewho	

CHART TWO

GRAND WEIGHTED TOTALS (1936-1991)

1.	Soyinka	2358
2.	Achebe	1827
3.	Ngugi	1053
4.	Armah	437
5.	Saro-Wiwa*	337
6.	Head	325
7.	Ekwensi	256
8.	Clark	236
9.	Emecheta	233
10.	Osofisan*	223
11.	La Guma	222
12.	Osundare *	207
13.	Iyayi*	190
14.	Tutuola	188
15.	Farah*	185
16.	Mphahlele	179
17.	Rotimi	177
18.	Brutus	175
19.	Okara	173
20.	Marechera*	161
21.	Chinweize*	149
22.	Abrahams	144
	Omotoso	
24.	Aidoo	137
25.	Nwapa	124
	Rive	
27.	Okigbo	123
28.	Okot	122
29.	Serote	115
30.	Okpewho	110
31.	Amadi	105
32.	Mapanje	103
33.	Ike	102
34.	Okri	100
35.	Fonlon	98
36.	Equiano	88
37.	Tlali	87
38.	Mazrui	82
40.	Nkosi	81
	Nwoga	
	Ndebele	
43.	Ngema	80
44.	Sepamla	79
	Sofola	
	Sowande	
47.	Plaatje	72
48.	Awoonor	70

CHART THREE

	BALE I (1986-76)				BALE II (1977-81)				BALE III (1982-86)				GRAND TOTALS			
Authors	*E*	*CR*	*RT*	*WT*	*E*	*CR*	*RT*	*WT*	*E*	*CR*	*RT*	*WT*	*E*	*CR*	*RT*	*WT*
Abrahams	40	69	109	189	21	29	50	92	31	45	76	138	92	143	235	419
Achebe	185	309	494	864	190	151	341	721	216	230	446	878	591	690	1281	2463
Armah	25	77	102	152	27	68	95	149	80	102	182	342	132	247	379	643
Awoonor	16	64	80	112	21	31	52	94	28	55	83	139	65	150	215	345
Brutus	26	35	61	113	16	25	41	73	52	54	106	210	94	114	208	396
Clark	30	154	184	244	17	52	69	103	49	114	163	261	96	320	416	608
Ekwensi	36	116	152	224	23	40	63	109	42	69	111	195	101	225	326	528
La Guma	14	49	63	91	12	30	42	66	50	48	98	198	76	127	203	355
Mphahlele	26	73	99	151	22	48	70	114	34	61	95	163	82	182	264	428
Ngugi	43	98	141	227	129	108	237	495	242	209	451	935	414	415	829	1657
Okara	16	111	127	159	7	43	50	64	21	71	92	134	44	225	269	357
Okigbo	39	91	130	208	16	41	57	89	39	49	88	166	94	181	275	463
Okot	30	42	72	132	20	45	65	105	55	51	106	216	105	138	243	453
Soyinka	175	280	455	805	144	168	312	600	418	312	730	1566	737	760	1497	2971
Tutuola	55	123	178	288	28	47	75	131	42	45	87	171	125	215	340	590

	BALE IV (1987-91)				NEW GRAND TOTALS			
Authors	*E*	*CR*	*RT*	*WT*	*E*	*CR*	*RT*	*WT*
Abrahams	30	54	84	144	122	197	319	563
Achebe	500	327	827	1827	1091	1017	2108	4290
Armah	109	110	219	437	241	357	598	1080
Awoonor	8	46	54	70	73	196	269	415
Brutus	47	34	81	175	141	148	289	571
Clark	55	71	126	236	151	391	542	844
Ekwensi	64	64	128	256	165	289	454	784
La Guma	59	45	104	222	135	172	307	577
Mphahlele	40	59	99	179	122	241	363	607
Ngugi	268	249	517	1053	682	664	1346	2710
Okara	34	71	105	173	78	296	374	530
Okigbo	24	51	75	123	118	232	350	586
Okot	28	38	66	122	133	176	309	575
Soyinka	676	330	1006	2358	1413	1090	2503	5329
Tutuola	40	68	108	188	165	283	448	778
Newcomers								
Emecheta	50	83	133	233	109	140	249	467
Farah	53	26	79	185	92	65	157	341
Head	88	61	149	325	166	119	285	617
Iyayi	56	22	78	190	59	31	90	208
Marechera	48	17	65	161	66	37	103	235
Osofisan	56	55	111	223	86	103	189	361
Osundare	63	18	81	207	72	22	94	238
Rotimi	44	45	89	177	100	143	243	443
Saro-Wiwa	104	25	129	337	112	29	141	365

CHART FOUR

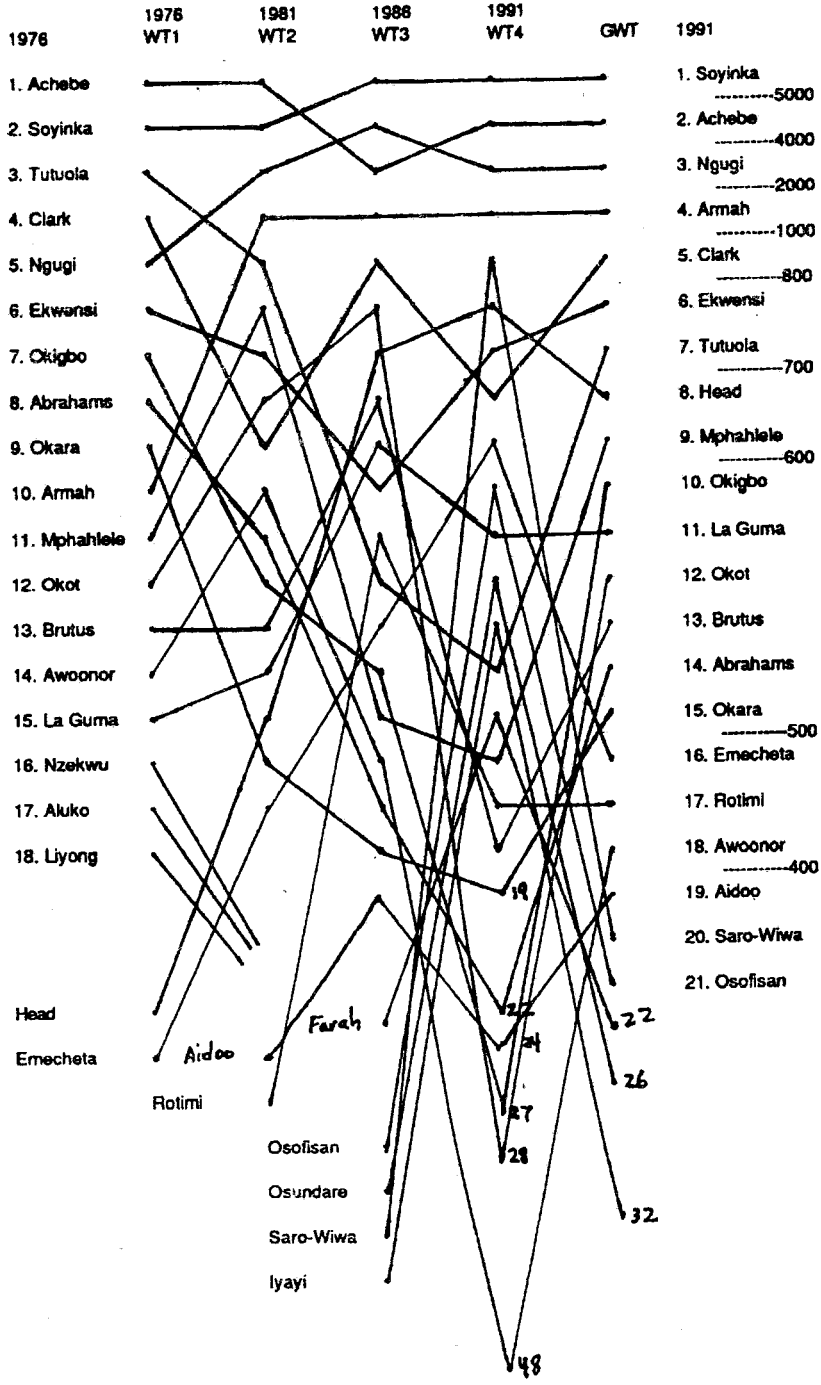
1976
1976 WT1
1981 WT2
1988 WT3
1991 WT4
GWT
1991
1. Achebe
2. Soyinka
3. Tutuola
4. Clark
5. Ngugi
6. Ekwensi
7. Okigbo
8. Abrahams
9. Okara
10. Armah
11. Mphahlele
12. Okot
13. Brutus
14. Awoonor
15. La Guma
16. Nzekwu
17. Aluko
18. Liyong
Head
Emecheta
Aidoo
Rotimi
Farah
Osofisan
Osundare
Saro-Wiwa
Iyayi
1. Soyinka ----------5000
2. Achebe ----------4000
3. Ngugi ----------2000
4. Armah ----------1000
5. Clark ----------800
6. Ekwensi
7. Tutuola ----------700
8. Head
9. Mphahlele ----------600
10. Okigbo
11. La Guma
12. Okot
13. Brutus
14. Abrahams
15. Okara ----------500
16. Emecheta
17. Rotimi
18. Awoonor ----------400
19. Aidoo
20. Saro-Wiwa
21. Osofisan
19
22
24
27
28
22
26
32
48

CHART FIVE

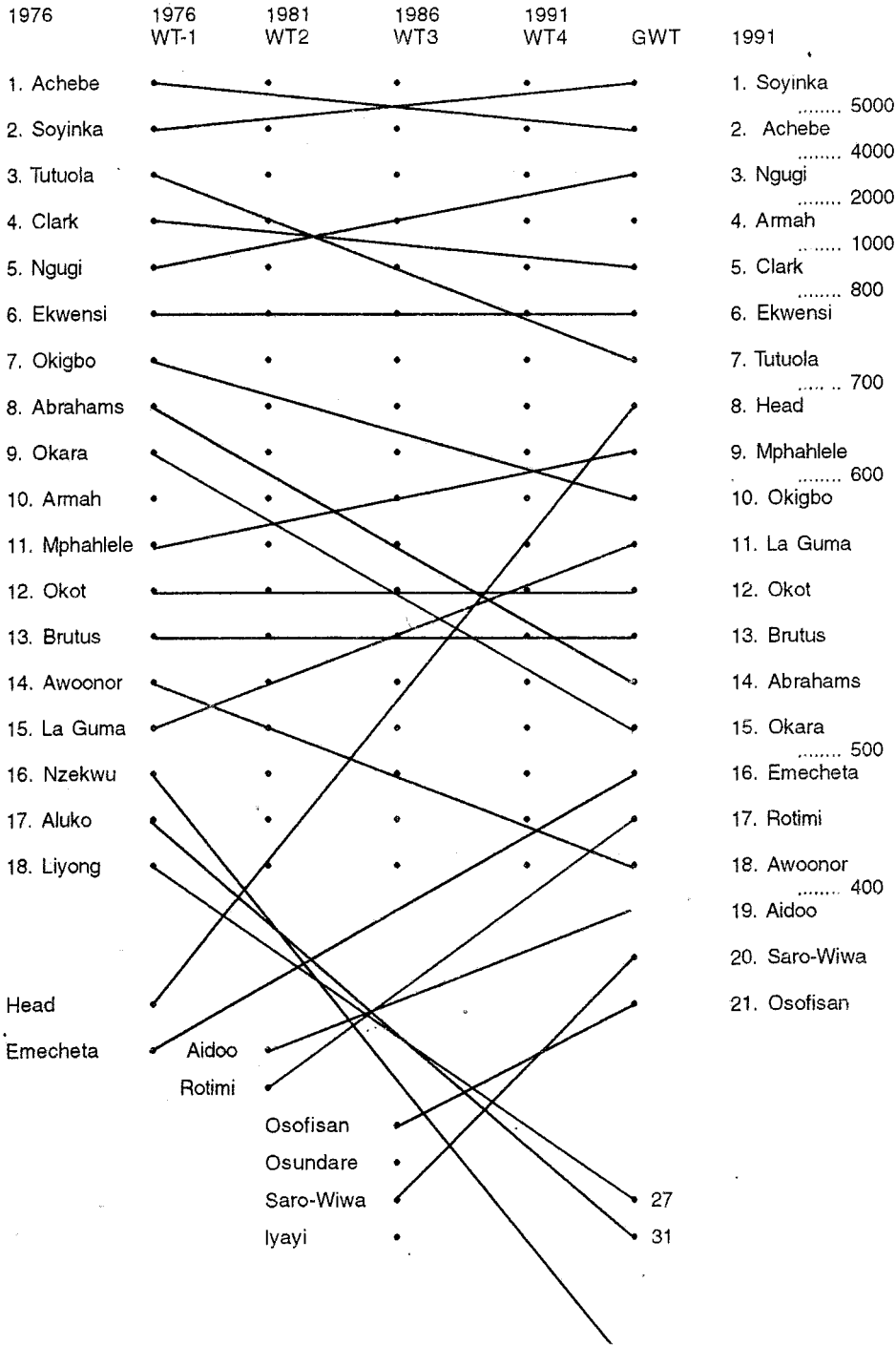
1976
1976 WT-1
1981 WT2
1986 WT3
1991 WT4
GWT
1991
1. Achebe
2. Soyinka
3. Tutuola
4. Clark
5. Ngugi
6. Ekwensi
7. Okigbo
8. Abrahams
9. Okara
10. Armah
11. Mphahlele
12. Okot
13. Brutus
14. Awoonor
15. La Guma
16. Nzekwu
17. Aluko
18. Liyong
Head
Emecheta
Aidoo
Rotimi
Osofisan
Osundare
Saro-Wiwa
Iyayi
27
31
1. Soyinka 5000
2. Achebe 4000
3. Ngugi 2000
4. Armah 1000
5. Clark 800
6. Ekwensi
7. Tutuola 700
8. Head
9. Mphahlele 600
10. Okigbo
11. La Guma
12. Okot
13. Brutus
14. Abrahams
15. Okara 500
16. Emecheta
17. Rotimi
18. Awoonor 400
19. Aidoo
20. Saro-Wiwa
21. Osofisan

CHART SIX

NEW GRAND WEIGHTED TOTALS (1936-1991)

1. Soyinka	5329	
2. Achebe	4290	
3. Ngugi	2710	
4. Armah	1080	
5. Clark	844	
6. Ekwensi	784	
7. Tutuola	778	
8. Head	617	
9. Mphahlele	607	
10. Okigbo	586	
11. La Guma	577	
12. Okot	575	
13. Brutus	571	
14. Abrahama	563	
15. Okara	530	

Reading R.K. Narayan Postcolonially

FAKRUL ALAM

R.K. Narayan was born in 1906 in British India; his first novel came out as Indians struggled for independence; he managed to get three more novels into print in the waning days of the Raj, and he produced his best work in the fifties and sixties when decolonisation became a global phenomenon. Moreover, Narayan has continued to be active as a novelist in the last three decades at a time when postcolonialism has caught on as a viable field of academic studies. It is not surprising, then, that scholars writing about Narayan should have tried to situate him, first in colonial, and then in post-colonial contexts from the time *Swami and Friends* came out in London in 1935 and he attracted significant attention as an Indian writer in English. So how does he fare when viewed from colonial and post-colonial angles ? I propose to answer this question by reviewing Narayan's work and their reception, beginning with the books he wrote in British India and then moving on to the major novels he wrote after India achieved Independence.

I

The English publisher Hamish Hamilton appeared to have consciously staked a claim for Narayan as a writer branching out in a different direction from the archcolonial Kipling by replacing Narayan's original title for his first novel, "Swami, The Tate" with *Swami and Friends*. As he pointed out in a letter, this "has the advantage of not only [being] easy to remember, but of having some resemblance to Kipling's *Stalky & Co.* with which I am comparing the book on the dust cover" (Quoted by Ram & Ram 155). Comparisons with representations of India by Western writers appeared inevitable to those looking at Narayan's novel at this time. Thus Malcolm Johnson of the American publishing firm Doubleday, explained why he would have to reject *Swami and Friends* even though he thought so highly of the book: " it is by far the best and homeliest picture of Indian life a that I

have see, but the interest here in books on India is largely limited to such tub-thumping as Katherine Mayo's [*Mother India*]" (Quoted by Ram & Ram 160). But Graham Greene put it best in his Introduction to Narayan's second novel *The Bachelor Arts* (1937) when he noted how India seemed to have eluded even the sympathetic E.M. Forster and implied that the colonizer's gaze was bound to be limited compared to the depth of the colonized's field of vision. Greene goes on to observe: "How Kipling would have detested Narayan's books" (ii), implying hat the typical colonial writer could not stomach the reality of India, gesturing thereby at a direction post-colonial criticism would take in locating Narayan: he gives us effortlessly glimpses of a live lived under colonial rule which the colonial writer could or would not see, of a culture which the colonizing imagination would rather evade than confront or come to terms with.

But perhaps he most helpful comments which post-colonial critics can glean from early appreciations of Narayan are those made by Malcolm Muggeridge. This English writer had spent a great deal of time in Travancore and Calcutta and saw clearly that Narayan's early novels were about " a way of life which [had] come to pass in India as a result of century and a half of British rule there" (quoted by Ram & Ram 205) As well, Muggeridge implied here and elsewhere in a letter to Narayan himself, they were of great value as portraits of the twilight of the Raj (Ram & Ram 200). In other words, while Greene and other early admirers valued Narayan for giving them an India not visible in English writer's representations, Muggeridge is sensitive to the fact that Narayan also depicts a region fundamentally altered by the colonial process.

Writing from a postcolonial perspective in 1993, Gita Rajan makes a somewhat different point about the way Narayan registers the English presence in India in his novels. In her essay, " Colonial Literature as Oppositional: R.K. Narayan's Unconscious Specular Register", Rajan views the novelist as one "who narrates his position as other to a central, Imperial culture" (26). However, this is unconsciously done, since Rajan has Narayan shaping his novels as "socially marketable product[s]" for the centre and finds him betraying a "certain admiration for replications of Imperial power structures" (26). A novel such as *Swami and Friends* to her is an ambivalent text which simultaneously "reveal[s] an allegiance to imperial authority (inside), and insurgence against this oppression (outside)" (27). In Rajan's

reading. Swami's rebellions against imperial authority are repeatedly aborted in the novel in favor of the colonial status quo, although she is willing to concede that Narayan has to be seen as daring and patriotic in writing about aborted rebellions against the English in 1935. To this postcolonial critic, then, when Swami attends an anti-British rally, and is inspired by a speaker to make the insurgent gesture of burning his British-made cap, only to excuse himself for this act to his father, he is revealing the contradictions in Narayan's stance as someone sensitive to the tyranny of British rule but "refusing to vocalize the independence metaphor" (34).

Narayan himself has had the occasion to take a "postcolonial" view of India. In the essay, "When India was a Colony," written after the "Raj Revival" of the eighties that Salman Rushdie, among others, had critiqued in his 1984 essay, "Outside the Whale", the novelist laments the fact that " Anglo-India apparently has a market, while a purely Indian subject has none" *(A Writer's Nightmare 222)*, reflecting no doubt on the difficulties his early novels had in securing a market anywhere. Narayan shows in the essay that he has no admiration for "the glamour of the feudal trappings of the British Raj" and of misrepresentations of India and Indians in the films and television serials associated with the Raj revival. Narayan remembers the colonial Englishman as someone who, typically, "preferred to leave the Indian alone, carrying his home on his back like a snail" (223). Perhaps this is why Narayan, with few exceptions, does not bother to fictionalize the Englishman in India. He shows scant respect, too, for "Brown Sahibs" (224), and it must be said that there are few traces of them in his novels. While willing to praise high ranking Indian bureaucrats of British India for their efficiency, Narayan stresses how they had become " dehumanized, especially during the national struggle for independence, when they may well be said to have out-Heroded Herod" (225). Narayan slights Indian Anglophiles, too, for being "so brainwashed that they would harangue and argue that India would be chaos if the British left, and called Mahatama Gandhi a demagogue and mischief maker".

A close reading of *Swami and Friends* itself suggest that Gita Rajan is unfair to Narayan's portrait of Swami's father the lawyer when she reads him opposing colonial insurrection - he is just another father rebuking his son for getting into trouble ! - and finds Narayan upholding the power of colonial authority through his depiction of swami's admiration of the local

Police Superintendent who happens to be the father of his friend Rajam. True, Swami is impressed by the paraphernalia of power, but the reader should be able to see the writer's amused perspective here. Rajam himself may seem to glory in the trappings of colonial power, but it is important to note, as Rajan does not, that he has his moments when he "had a momentary sympathy for Gandhi; no wonder he was dead against the Government " (*Swami* 112). Also, far from affirming colonial authority, *Swami and Friends*, gives us negative portraits of colonizing figures as in the character of Swami's scripture teacher, the Zealot Ebenzer, who thinks it is his mission to disabuse his Indian pupils of heathenism. And while Narayan nowhere critiques the primacy of English in colonial education, he hints at the unreality of textbooks such as the one prescribed for Swami "about a woolly sheep" (*Swami*, 24)- a point which is accentuated when we read Narayan's essay " English in India" where he talks about his puzzlement as a young boy when he came across "A was an Apple Pie" in his English Primer *(A Story-Teller's World 20)*.

A nuanced postcolonial view of Narayan's treatment of colonial Malgudi would therefore see Narayan reflecting the way English rule had pervaded the life of the colonized, who, even as they struggle against it politically, had willingly or unwillingly accepted many aspects of the colonizer's culture. Thus while *Swami and Friends* describes its central character as swayed by the 1930 Civil Disobedience Movement and participating with the schoolboy's unthinking zeal in it and even being expelled from school for his violence, it betrays his enthusiasm for English heroes like the cricketer Tate, institutions such as the M.C.C., and even Rolls-Royce cars at the same time. And while Swami's father scolds his son for his part in the anti-colonial movement, he does not seem to be against it and even appears to be something of a partisan for the nationalist cause. Swami may be growing up in a self-sufficient "Indian" world, but he cannot escape some amount of Anglicization in his outlook.

Which is to say, growing up under the Raj meant that English cultural icons alternated in the Indian subjects's psyche with local ones; just as a map of Malgudi town would reveal a road called Vianyak Mudali street running close to one named Lawley Extension. This is why in her recent and helpful work *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature* Elleke Boehmer overstates the issue when she argues that Narayan may be using the English Languages,

but does so to "demarcate a very non-English cultural space, defined by its own beliefs and practices" (176). A more accurate observation would be to note that the early novels show an essentially Indian middle-class way of life, but one molded to an extent by more than hundred years of colonial rule.

In fact, *Swami and Friends*, *The Bachelor of Arts*, and the first part of Narayan's fourth novel *The English Teacher* taken together constitute something of a bildungsroman of a colonial upbringing where we witness consistently ambivalent responses to induction into the colonized's culture. Even though the three books have different protagonists, in all three we see the heroes simultaneously resisting or treating with suspicion some aspects of colonial culture while being influenced or stirred by some other elements in it. Thus *The Bachelor of Arts* Chandran goes to a college where he is taught Greek drama by the principal, Professor Brown, and participates wholeheartedly in the debating society but resents secretly the Professor for going through the motions of presiding over a debate. As far as Chandran is concerned, Brown's thoughts really "are at the tennis-court and the card-table in the English Club," a club which will not admit Indians out of "sheer color ignorance" (5). Nevertheless, he will freely acknowledge his liking for Brown and his admiration for his classes afterwards. Chandran is taught English by the fastidious and conceited Mr. Gajapathi, who declares at one point that "no Indian could ever write English" (24) and at another that it was a mistake to assume that critics such as Dowden or Bradley were always right about Shakespeare, implying thereby that he, an Indian, knew more than they did about the Bard.

Like *Swami and Friends*, *The Bachelor of Arts* reflects clearly its origins in a society in ferment because of the anti-colonial movement. At a meeting of the College Historical Society, of which Chandran is the general secretary, for example, an Indian Professor alludes to the controversy about the Black Hole of Calcutta, revealing thereby the way Indian historians had begun to contest English versions of the notorious incident, but then declares confusingly that what India needed at the moment was not really "Self-Government or Economic Independence, but a clarified, purified Indian History" (37). Another Indian, Veeraswami, reads a paper blasting British rule in India and urging for their expulsion; his extremism, predictably, leads to threats of censorship on future presentations made at the Society from Professor Brown, and causes Chandran to distance himself from Veeraswami.

But while the air is thick with talk of political reform, anti-imperialist sentiments, threats of censorship, and debates about the past, present and future course of Indian history, daily life seems to be unaffected by the political turmoil and Chandran even toys with the idea of going to England for more studies !

In *The English Teacher*, Krishna, the thirty-year-old protagonist teaches students at the Albert Mission College to "mug up Shakespeare and Milton and secure high marks" (2). He resents Principal Brown's fastidiousness about correct English and inability to use "any of the two hundred Indian languages" (3), but despite his bitterness about teaching the language and its literature, he is almost moved to tears while teaching the storm scene of *King Lear* to his Malgudi students. Unlike Narayan, who seemed to have no doubts about choosing English as his medium for creative work, and has declared unambiguously that to him "English is an absolutely *swadeshi* language" *(A Writer's Nightmare 26)*, Krishna vacillates between writing in English and Tamil, unable to make up his mind about which language he would make his name in.[1]

Of his early novels, the third one, *The Dark Room* (1938) is the only one which is not autobiographical, and uniquely for Narayan, has a woman as the protagonist. It is also a book which does not allude directly to the colonizer's presence, although it is a work which records the strains created by westernization in affluent Indian families. In it the central character Savitri makes a bid to leave her philandering and bullying husband but finds at the end that she is unable to take her place in the world outside without her family.

Although *The Dark Room* has no explicit reference to the colonizer's presence - despite the signs of westernization that are everywhere in the book- at least one critic has attempted to read it postcolonially. In *The Politics of Home : Postcolonial Relocations and Twentieth-century Fiction*, Rosemary Marangoly George approaches this work as one where there are many "indirect references to the burgeoning nationalism and its many attendant valorization of Indian tradition" (121). Narayan, George declares, is using the novel to critique the westernizing of India under colonial rule through his depiction of Savitri's adulterous husband Ramini. He has succumbed to the liberated working woman Shanta Bai who quotes Omar Khayyam, detests Indian mythological films, and is devoted to Garbo and Dietrich. According to George, "Shanta Bai is portrayed in this novel as manifestation of the poverty of self-

identity that colonialism offers those who reject their : Indianness". "Indians," George argues, "is in this discourse as elsewhere, completely subsumed by the precepts of Hindu ideology" (123), thereby joining the ranks of a number of postcolonial critics who attack Narayan for upholding an essentially upper class, Brahmin, and even reactionary ideology. Narayan is seen by these critics to resist change and reveal a "conservative nationalism" (123). Shanta Bai is typical of the "loose" (i.e. immoral, Westernized) women and men in Narayan's novels" in being an outsider and in being repulsed or vanquished at the end. Narayan, George suggests, has a utopian streak in him which makes him construct a Malgudi in all his fiction which will inevitably resist change coming from outsider like Shanta Bai. To this postcolonial critic, this affirmation of tradition must be seen as a constant in all of Narayan' novels: his "reiteration of the importance of a traditionally ordered society serves to consolidate the solace offered by Hindu nationalism in 1938, as in 1995" (124). And therefore George sees Savitri in Narayan's novel reverting back to the role the novelist has assigned her even in her name - Savitri is the Hindu archetype of the long-suffering, all-sacrificing woman—and going back in defeat to her family.

The problem with George's "postcolonial" reading of *The Dark Room* though is that it is too reductive and is patently unfair to Narayan. For one thing, George does not mention that, if we leave aside Ramani, the most disagreeable character in the novel is the priest in whose temple Savitri is given a job and a place to stay - clearly Narayan has no sympathy at all for the "official" upholder of tradition and religion and caste. Also, while Shanta Bai is portrayed unsympathetically as a drifter and a wrecker of homes, at the end it is Savitris vanquished and not her. Moreover, while the westernized Shanta Bai is cast negatively and the typical Hindu wife Savitri is defeated, Savitri's close friend Gangu is shown to be triumphant in her marriage. Gangu, we are told, is training to be a film star, a professional musician, the Malgudi delegate to the All-India Women's conference, as well as a politician, Although she seems to be overambitious, she has the full support of her school teacher husband who thinks of himself as a believer in women's freedom. True, Narayan treats the couple humorously, but the marriage is working and Gangu is a happy woman. Far from showing women as constantly vanquished. *The Dark Room* offers us too the character of Poni, wife of the locksmith-thief who rescue Savitri when she tries to drown herself

after she leaves her house. Poni should be especially vulnerable since she is childless and since she and her husband come from the lowest rung of caste society, but she appears to be completely dominant and is perhaps the most likable and spirited character in the novel. To make the point directly, what Narayan had done through his treatment of the "Savitri" myth is open up discussions about the role of women in a modernizing society without telling us through the ending that all Indian women are doomed to replay the part laid out for them by tradition.

A post colonial reading of *The Dark Room* (or other Narayan novels) need not, then, assume that Narayan is completely against change and always in favour of the status quo. What is certainly true is that he registers changes in the fabric of society under the impact of colonial rule and depicts the fissures created by modernization. It is precisely his ability to portary some areas of Indian life as being transformed by Western ideas while showing how other aspects resist change that make him a major novelist. Thus George is wrong in thinking that because Shanta Bai is described as reacting negatively to Indian mythological films and preferring Hollywood ones, Narayan is slighting Westernization through a negatively cast character (George 123), since Savitri's children too declare their dislike of Indian theological films, opting instead for Hollywood productions such as the Tarzan series or *Frankenstein* or Shirley Temple movies. And while Savitri is "enchanted" by the film about a long suffering wife of Indian myths it is only her cad of a husband who approves of the patience and uncomplaining behaviour of the woman (*The Dark Room* 29).

II

Narayan's great theme, the, is not resistance to change but the inevitability and the problematics of change in a modernizing India. *The Dark Room* is only the first of his novels where he goes back to Indian myths and legends to illustrate this theme. Reverting to the Savitri legend in this novel was part of his search for more indigenous molds for his tales, and in the novels that he wrote after India's independence, Narayan kept returning to Indian scriptural traditions to provide scaffolds for his fictions about Malgudi. It is important, however, to realize that going back to his Indian roots is not primarily an anticolonial gesture. As he observes in his essay, "English in India," the very idea of looking "at the gods, demons, sages, and kings of our mythology and epics, not as some remote concoctions but

as types and symbols, possessing psychological validity, even when seen against the contemporary background" came "under the impact of modern literature" (*A story-teller's World* 22). It is also important to note that Narayan's use of them did not mean that he would be retelling these stories without ambiguity or with the thought that the endings of these tales were already foreclosed. As he embarked on his major fictional phase after independence, Narayan would go back to the immediate and colonial past as well as founding myths to explain the present and explore routes into the future for the newly independent nation, but he would always have a very wry and ambiguous perspective on the way ancient myths applied to the present.

Mr. Sampath (1948), the first Novel that Narayan wrote after India's independence, is not one of his best novels, but it is an interesting attempt to represent Malgudi in the waning days of British rule and connect it with a mythical period of Indian history and arrive at a complex perspective on successive waves of colonization. The novel's central character Srinivas is a rather confused but likable journalist who gets into film-making when his printer, Sampath, involves him in a film project as its script-writer. Myth enters into the novel partly through Srinivas's meditation - his ever-wandering mind often finds an archetype in Nataraj, God of dance -and partly through the film-script Srinivas is made to write by Sampath.

Soon after Sampath persuades him to join his film production team, Srinivas wonders about a possible story-line: as he tells his wife, perhaps he would write " about our country's past and present. A story about Gandhiji's non-violence, our politics, all kinds of things" (*Mr. Sampath* 96)".[2] When he presents his ideas to Sampath and his Hollywood returned Chief Executive De Millo, this has become the story of "Ram Gopal, who had devoted his life to the abolition of the caste system and other evils of society. His ultimate ambition in life was to see his motherland free from foreign domination. He was a disciple of Gandhi's philosophy" (98). Not surprisingly, the production team is quite indifferent to the notion of such an idealistic script, and soon Srinivas is working on a "proper" Indian subject for a film: the story of the God Shiva, his love for Parvithi and his encounter with Kama, the God of Love. Srinivas tries to project himself into the world of the gods to make his script come alive, but the quotidian constantly keeps interrupting him. For one thing, Sampath and De Millo tamper with the myth to make it fit for

the popular cinema until it becomes almost a parody of the original. For another, Ravi, a neighbor that Srinivas has befriended, loses his job because the company he works for fires him because he misspells the name "Cholmondeley." So, instead of ruminating on the "ice-capped home of Lord Shiva" (102), he finds himself interceding on behalf of Ravi with his boss, Mr. Shilling, the Director of Englandia Banking Corporation, and remonstrating with him for acting as if the East India Company was still in business. Clearly, the ancient myths are quite remote from life in colonial India and cannot be reproduced in their essential forms anymore!

Later in the novel, Srinivas witnesses a kind of exorcism in his own house performed to drive out what appears to be evil spirits who have taken over Ravi's mind and driven him mad. As he observes the ceremony, Srinivas tells himself that he has entered a zone free from time. He imagines the whole of Indian history, from the time of the Ramayanas to the present period of Edward Shilling and his Englandia Bank, parade past him. The moral of the pageant seemed to be that India would go on and survive the latest wave of colonization : "Dynasties rose and fell, Palaces and mansions appeared and disappeared. The entire country went down under the fire and sword of the invader..... But it always had its rebirth and growth" (207). In other words, neither India's mythical past nor its more recent colonial phase mattered in the ultimate analysis since Indian history exists inevitably in a state of flux. Myths such as that of Shiva and colonial administrators such as Shilling impinge on everyday life directly or indirectly but neither can take over the present forever. Ruminating on India's multilayered history could only lead to a recognition of the country's complex heritage and its endless ability to elude typecasting.[3]

In addition to the allusions to Gandhi and the political protests going on in India in the decade before the country achieved independence and the indignation against the English presence and arrogance exemplified by someone like Shilling, *Mr. Sampath* contains a number of other references which situate it as a novel written at a time of colonial repression and intense anticolonial feeling. There is, for instance, the declaration Srinivas has to make in court to the effect that his paper would steer clear of politics to comply with colonial policy, especially rigorously applied in India in the years before independence, and allusions to draconian press laws. There are

also references to a country in ferment when Mr. Sampath describes labor trouble everywhere. Throughout the novel, narayan has Srinivas reflect confusingly, and at times somewhat fatuously, on these reminders of an agitated India, and on the cycle of violence which Gandhi had decided to counter with non-violence at this time. Narayan is certainly not a political novelist and is never abrasive about the colonial presence, but clearly Srinivas represents the perplexity of the sensitive individual in an India rendered frantic by the "Quit India" agitation.

The Financial Expert (1952), the work that followed *Mr. Sampath,* inaugurates the major phase of Narayan's work as a novelist. As Elleke Boehmer has indicated in *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*, Narayan joins in this phase other postcolonial writers of the period who "tried to integrate the cultural life of the past with their post independence. Westernized reality" (202). Boehmer contends that, "more specifically than in his early stories, the plots of R.K. Narayan's 1950s and 1960s novels are patterned on concepts of Karma and Hindu spiritual progression" (203). But while this observation may be true , it does not preclude the possibility that Narayan uses Hindu myths and beliefs in the works of this period with, at times, considerable ambiguity. What Bruce King has observed about Narayan's use of cultural myths in his fiction is especially true of *The Financial Expert* and almost all the novels that follow : "the references to myths and cultural ideals are neither satiric nor ennobling; the novels treat Indian philosophy and legends ambiguously, leaving the implication that traditional wisdom is still true, although its truth is revealed more through absurdities than the strict application of traditional formulas to modern life" (King 181). Which is to say, in his use of Indian myths and legends Narayan is ironic in the postcolonial manner and not a traditionalist by any means.

The Financial Expert, for example, has an indigenous scaffold in that Narayan is intent on illustrating through the novel the scriptural injunction that a man wanting to succeed in this world could not expect to count on Saraswati, goddess of enlightenment, and Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth at the same time. But Narayan approaches the traditional belief enigmatically: the central character becomes rich by following the fantastic prescription set out by a priest who may or may not be a fraud and who asks him to propitiate Lakshmi.

The Financial Expert contains only a few allusions to the British presence in India, but everywhere we come up with the evidence of a society being transformed under the impact of modernization. At the outset we see the central character, Margayya, making a living by acting as a "financial expert" to illiterate peasants who find taking loans directly from the local co-operative bank too intimidating. Margayya himself, however, is intimidated by the challenge offered to him by the secretary of the bank, "a very tidy young man who looked 'as if he had just come from Europe' " (16). The class divisions of society have been accentuated by such people and Margayya feels very "plebeian" because of them (20). In a fit of pique, he lectures his clients that "they must all adopt civilized ways" (24) if they wanted to survive in the new world. To be "civilized" meant to Margayya to have all the icons of colonial power: money, a car, a son studying " not in a Corporation School, but in the convent" and hobnobbing "with the sons of the District Collector of the Superintendent of Police" (29), and a house in Lawley Road where the colonial elite lived.

The backdrop to Margayya's rise to the pinnacles of financial power in the novel is Malgudi in the last decades of British rule in India; that is to say, a society in turmoil because of the war years and the agitation going on in the waning days of the Raj. It is a world of rampant corruption and go-getters where rice-merchants as well as druggists hoarded their stocks and sold them illicitly, of devious army contractors, of touts and middlemen, of black marketers and corrupt New Delhi government officials (192-3). In this world, Margayya in his incarnation as a financial wheeler-dealer and the wealthiest man in Malgudi is so indispensable that even the government courts him so that he can contribute to the War Fund, only to be repulsed by his devious adviser, Dr. Pal, who has an anti-colonial argument ready for it : "Why should we contribute to a fund with which the British and the U.S, fight their enemy - notour enemy; our enemy is Britain not Germany" (198). This is, of course, the line adopted by Congress during the war to thwart British intentions to defer talks on independence on account of the war, but Narayan is really showing the way anti-colonial arguments were being used to cover the greed of a section of businessmen. It is as if Narayan is depicting the wolves let loose as the long night of the colonial period drew to its close.

Narayan's most detailed portrait of the years leading to Indian independence his most direct engagement with political history in fiction is his subsequent novel, *Waiting for the Mahatama* (1955). Written eight years after Indian Independence, it is also a book where Narayan seems to be doing a postmortem on the roles played by Indian in their struggle for freedom and the implications these had for the future. To this end, Narayan weaves the story of his central character, Sriram, and his obsessive pursuit of the Gandhian activist, Bharati, with all the major happenings of the pre-independence years: the Quit India Movement, Gandhi's non-violent programs against British rule and for mental emancipation of all Indians, his arrests, the Dandi March, the violent struggles against the British, Including Subhas Bose's program for the National Army, and the repressive response, independence itself, partition and the chaos that accompanied it, and at the end, the assassination of Gandhi.

Narayan, however, is not interested in making any anticolonial statement through the novel - there is even a memorable encounter in it between Sriram the "Quit India" activist and the planter Matheison where the expatriate Englishman has the better of the exchange with the nationalist. In a way this encounter helps us to understand Narayan's Major intention in writing *Waiting for the Mahatama* : he wants to suggest through this novel his belief that the massive problems and bloodletting that accompanied India's independence, the thwarted ideals of non-violence and the promises denied in the years that followed, were inevitable when viewed in the context of Gandhi's life and death, the nature of his followers, and the eventual dissipation of his ideals of non-violence. As the back cover blurb of the Indian Thoughts Edition of *Waiting for the Mahatama* - in all probability written by Narayan himself - has it : Gandhi's tragedy is that "he is so much greater than his followers. Most of them accept his ideas enthusiastically, and without realizing it, pervert them to suit their own coarser personalities." Thus in the counter with Matheison, Sriram shows a testiness one would not associate with an exponent of non-violence, and the dignity of the planter's response contrasts sharply with Sriram's almost violent words.

Narayan presents Gandhi as a wise, principled, and inspirational leader who knew that Indians had to change themselves and their society fundamentally if they were to achieve true independence. With the exception of Bharati, however, the Gandhi of the novel attracts followers who join his

movement more out of self-interest than love of him or India. Sriram, for example, is drawn to the movement only because of his passion for Bharati and feels lost when she is incarcerated. He drifts into violence, lets himself be guided by the unprincipled terrorist Jagadish, and becomes a convert to Subhas Chandra Bose's project of driving the British out of India by force till he is caught by the police and put into jail.

Because nearly everyone who had joined Gandhi's movement against British rule does so without a change in their hearts and minds, when independence comes India is shown to be a land where nothing much had been transformed even after the British had left. If anything, things are much worse soon after the British have quit. This is why when Sriram is released from jail and walks out of it into independent India, he realizes with a shock that nothing had changed for the better : "What was the sign that it was independent? He looked about him. The trees were as usual, the road was not in the least improved, and policeman still rode on the footboard of highway buses" (*Waiting* 149). Worse, he is told, the food situation was worrying, things were chaotic, religious riots had broken out in different parts of the country, and people were in "various difficulties and hardships" (151). Unscrupulous people like Jagadish thrive in this new world by playing up their contributions to the war of independence, even though he had managed to stay out of trouble during it while Sriram had found himself in jail as a terrorist. Only Bharati - significantly named by Gandhi "daughter of India" and weaned away by him from violence into complete devotion to his cause of non-violence and self-denial - seems to have decided to pursue Gandhi's ideals till the end.

Waiting for the Mahatama concludes with Gandhi's death, but because he has consented to Sriram's marriage with Bharati before the assassin gets him, the novel can be said to be not entirely pessimistic in its ending. We can assume that Bharati, a representative of the innumerable women who had joined Gandhi's non-cooperation movement and had advanced it along his lines, is going to take over the task of nation-building by looking after the children orphaned by the riots that accompanied independence. She also appears capable of enlisting Sriram in this cause and guiding him so that together they could keep Gandhi's mission alive.

Infact, the ending of the novel is so schematic that one is tempted to say that it has been conceived as a "national allegory" in the sense that

Frederic Jameson has defined the term in his much-talked about essay on postcolonial writing, "World Literature in the Age of Multinational Capitalism." Jameson, we remember, had observed how writers of the "third world" reacted to the failure of independence movements which failed to transform themselves into genuine occasions for reform by resorting to allegory, a genre out of fashion in the west, so that "the telling of the individual story and the individual experience cannot but ultimately involve the whole laborious telling of the experience of the collectivity itself" (Jameson 158). Jameson's insight allows us to note that Narayan is intent in this text in contributing to discussions on national failures in the post-Gandhi era and the path which could be taken to develop a national identity in his image. Or to put it differently through a phrase used in another context by Timothy Brennan in a discussion of the novel and nationalism : *Waiting for the Mahatama* is Narayan's most direct attempt to "explore postcolonial *responsibility*" even as it is presented as a story of disappointment (Brennan 63). It is also Narayan's most overtly political work on a topical issue of national importance, Gandhi's death and his legacy in post-independence India, although he would make another attempt to deal with another national issue directly in his fiction in *The Painter of Signs*, as we will soon see.

The next two novels that Narayan wrote, both among his best-known works, *The Guide* (1958) and *The Man-Eater of Malgudi* (1961), move away from politics and revert to his strategy of using Hindu beliefs and myths ambiguously as scaffolds for fable-like narratives of presentday Indians. *The Guide*, thus, presents us with the story of the roguish Raju who seems to end his life on a saintly high by fasting till death for a village stricken by famine, as if he is an reincarnation of the mythical Devaka who "was a hero, saint, or something of the kind" (19) In shrewdly casting Raju's modern story - his life encapsulates the coming of the railways in South India and ends with an American film crew reporting on his apparent ascension - in the classic mold, and in suggesting wryly that the life embodied concepts of Hindu paths to beatification and sainthood, Narayan in this novel assumes that mantle of the postcolonial writer intent on using the myths of his people but in an ironic manner.

Nevertheless, *The Guide* (and its author) has come for some harsh comments from one of the leading postcolonial critics of our time, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and it is therefore pertinent to find out why she treats

the work so dismissively. Spivak wrote her essay, "How to Read a 'Culturally Different Book' with "a feminist reader or teacher in USA" in mind (Spivak 133), and she reminds them of the importance of reading a text such as this one so that its realism is seen in conjunction with an emerging sense of nationhood and as a work to be contextualized in "the neo-colonial traffic in cultural identity" (127). At the same time she would like to provide her readers with "a clue to the roadblocks to a too-quick enthusiasm for the other, in the aftermath of colonialism" (135). From such a perspective, it is quite appropriate that Spivak more of less ignores Raju's ambiguous progress from rogue to sainthood and concentrates on the presentation of Rosy, the temple-dancer turned educated but bored wife Raju becomes infatuated with and turns impresario to as she turns into a professional "classical" dancer. Categorizing Narayan as one of the first generation of Indo-Anglian writers who are "novelists of the nation as local color" (!28), dismissing the ambiguity of the ending as "a nice bit of controlled indeterminancy", accusing the Indo-Anglian writers of the first phase of producing "an immediately accessible 'other' without tangling with the problems of racism or exploitation" (130), Spivak rests her case against Narayan ultimately by describing his treatment of Rosie as an instance of the elision of the temple-dancer's predicament in society. Or as she so gnomically puts it: "the transmogrification of female dance from male-dependent prostitution to emancipated performance helps the colonial elite to engage in a species of historical (hysterical) retrospection" which produces a golden age" (135).

Like Rosemary Marangoly George on *The Dark Room*, even, more maddeningly so, Spival critiques *The Guide* and its creator without bothering to read the novel for its own sake. Her feminist radical chic interpretation of the novel makes her inevitably treat Rosie as a subaltern who is misrepresented and not allowed to represent herself. In the novel itself though, Rosie may start as a confused and vulnerable woman but ends up as someone who finds her own voice, even if she cannot shake off her allegiance to her husband completely despite the indifference with which he had treated her. Spivak mentions repeatedly that her task in her essay is "decolonising the imagination", but seems unaware of the irony of becoming a guide herself of the elite of the western academy. In contrast, it hardly needs to be affirmed, Narayan's strength is in being rooted in his community. Spivak appears to be unaware that Narayan has written continuously for

Indian readers as well as western ones ever since he took up writing as a career. Also, as a careful reading of the ending of the novel will reveal, Narayan has the detachment necessary to laugh at Indian routes to sainthood as well as western exaltation of Indian mystics. Far from being "a local color" novelist: Narayan's treatment of the western media cirus surrounding Raju at the end reveals his amusement at purveyors of the exotic and the commodification of sainthood. Spivak, hyper-serious and ultra-politically correct feminist critic bent on patronizing an elderly male novelist cannot grasp that far from being a "nice bit of indeterminacy", the ending is manic comedy about the irrational in Indian culture and its apotheosizing by a section of the west. It is surprising in this context to see how Spivak goes of on a tangent to discuss the temple-dancer in Indian culture but fails to take note of the temple-dancer Rangi of Narayan's next novel, *The Man-Eater of Malgudi*, revealing thereby a lack of familiarity with Narayan's ocuvre. Obviously, she does not have the time or the inclination to read Narayan's novels in their context or without hoisting her "revolutionary" political agenda on them.

Reading postcolonially therefore should involve an appreciation of the ironic mode in which Narayan works and the complexity of his stance. The point can be made once again in discussing Narayan's use of Indian myths in *The Man-Eater of Malgudi* and his wry use of such stereotypes of Indians as their passivity. On the surface, this is the story of a confrontation between the narrator, Nataraj, the wily but warm-hearted and docile printer of Malgudi, and Vasu, an eccentric and hyperactive taxidermist who forces himself into Nataraj's attic and proceeds to disrupt Malgudi life and traditions. Narayan casts Vasu in the role of the demon Ravanna and pits him against the forces of orthodoxy represented by Nataraj and his friends. At the end, Vasu self-destructs in the way demons often do in myths, and Nataraj and his Malgudi friends are able to go back to a quietist mode of life.

Narayan, however, inserts into this ostensibly nonpolitical plot a number of references to issues about nation-building which stamp the novel as one exploring an issue central to postcoloniality : should the newly independent nation reject the western model of development ? To Molly Mahood, Vasu represents the modernizing westernizing option available to India which would transform Indian life at the expense of the rhythms of traditional Indian society. In the end, Mahood claims, Nataraj rejects the allure

of Vasu's apparent dynamism and "the alien political philosophies and economic aims" they signify (Mahood 113).

It is easy to see that Vasu is domineering, destructive, reckless, and anti-social and that in the course of the narrative he is alienated from almost everyone in Malgudi. But the test reveals too that Vasu is a patriot and has been an activist in the cause of Indian disobedience and in opposing British rule. Moreover, he has even been sent to jail for his nationalist zeal. Obviously, then, he cannot be, as Mahood thinks he is, the type of the neocolonialist. One notices, too, as does Nataraj, that there is much to admire in Vasu. For instance, his spirited, no-nonsense, good-humored ways appear preferable to the small-talk Nataraj's friends indulge in and the purposelessness, inactivity, and inefficiency they display. When Vasu insists that his countrymen are "spineless," and declares that they must "show better spirit" we tend to agree that he has a point (*Man-Eater* 133). His impatience with festivities of the type Nataraj has a hand in arranging to commemorate the publication of an epic poem of dubious merit composed by one of his friends is also understandable.

Significantly, Nataraj is not only attracted to Vasu, but by the conclusion of the book he has become quite energetic and combative - indeed, he starts to act like the restless Vasu and even manages to render him ineffective. As I have argued at length elsewhere, one can thus read *The Man Eater of Malgudi* as a story of identification and displacement where at the end Vasu is neutralized after stimulating Nataraj unwittingly into becoming a bundle of energy. (Alam 141-53). To put it differently, Nataraj can dispose of Vasu, once he has imbibed his activism. This suggests that Narayan does not advocate rejecting the western option completely. On the otherhand, the text does not endorse the moribund society of Malgudi, even though this is not the same thing as saying that Narayan would like to do away with it completely. Perhaps, then, Narayan's narrative is designed to indicate that Indians should get rid of their passivity and inculcate some of the west's dynamism without giving up their sociability and all of their traditions.

In *The Man Eater of Malgudi*, (as in *The Guide*), Narayan's intentions are therefore much more complex than they may appear to be and his tone polyphonic. Failure to record the novelist's ambiguous relationship to his characters and Indian myths and beliefs, the subtlety with which he views change, and the irony with which he pits western values against eastern ones.

have led critics to oversimplifications about his plots and themes and perspective on traditions, modernization, and nation-building Even the great postcolonial writer V.S. Naipaul is drawn to such oversimplifications, as can be seen in his comments on Narayan's next novel, *The Vendor of Sweets* (1967), which he interprets as a book ending with Narayan endorsing orthodox Hindu values (Naipaul 32-39).[4]

True, *The Vendor of Sweets* sets up tradition against disruptive, western influences apparently only to affirm orthodoxy. Tradition here is represented by Jagan, the vendor of sweets, and modernity by his spoiled son Mali who has come back from the USA not only with a Korean-American woman called Grace but also American idioms of business. Clearly, we are into a postcolonial world of cross-cultural exchanges and it is thus appropriate to find that among the oppositions presented in the novel is that between Jagan's purist concept of India and the opening up favoured by Mali's generation.

The Vendor of Sweets is set in the sixties, but Narayan manages to remind us of the way the colonial past has sedimented in the mind of the older generation throughout the novel by taking us into Jagan's consciousness. He does so by making Jagan thing back continually to the time he had participated in Gandhi's movement against colonial rule. Jagan had even gone to jail for it, and tries desperately to hold on to Gandhian beliefs in a world which appears to have forgotten his example. Paradoxically, Jagan is also attached to mementos of the Raj; among his prized possessions is a signed portrait of the Englishman, Mr. Noble, who had been District Collector of Malgudi, and who used to visit him for lessons in Astrology. Paradoxically, too, his canon of great writing includes Shakespeare as well as Valmiki, Bharati, and Tagore. Jagan is also drawn by instinct to the statue of Sir Frederic Lawley, an enduring icon of colonial rule in Malgudi's cityscape. Try as he might then, Jagan cannot embrace "authentic" Hindu culture and was never able to do so; his thoughts mark him as irredeemably hybrid in that colonial rule has left its stamp on him forever. No wonder his orthodox sister and brother had ostracized him for doing something as heretical as joining Gandhi and mixing with untouchables! And as he will admit occasionally: "There are bound to be changes of outlook from generation to generation. Otherwise there will be no progress" (*Vendor* 46).

As Ashok Bery has stressed in "Purity, Hybridity and Identity: R.K. Narayan's *The Vendor of Sweets*". Narayan may be setting up an opposition between westernizing and purist concepts of Indian culture, but it is "an opposition which inverts the dominant hierarchy" (Bery 53). Thus at the end of the novel Jagan may have taken refuge in a Hindu retreat as a response to a world contaminated by relationships such as that between Mali and Grace, but he by no means renounces the world and his possessions completely to do so - he cannot resist taking his cheque book along with him ! He is even willing to forgive his son and accommodate him in his house although he has defiled it by living in it with a casteless woman whom he has not even bothered to marry. Significantly, Jagan is especially sympathetic towards Grace and appreciates her attempts to be an Indian wife/ daughter-in-law and is quite ready to accept her till he finds out that Mali had backed out of his promise to marry her. It is noteworthy too that the novel ends with Jagan's testament to Grace's character: "she was a good girl" (*Vendor*, 192) and offer to help her. We discover moreover that she has found a job in a woman's hostel in Malgudi. Berry's postcolonial reading of the novel, therefore, appears to be a sound one : far from being an affirmation of Hindu beliefs centering on purity. *The Vendor of Sweets* is "precisely about accommodating imperfection and hence hybridity. By destabilizing ideas of purity, it paves the way for different conceptions of identity" (berry 62).

Narayan followed *The Vendor of Streets* with *The Painter of Signs* (1976), the last of his novels to deal centrally with issues relating to India's colonial heritage and its postcolonial situation. Interestingly enough, it is also the most intertextual of his works in that it echoes in its themes and structure a number of his earlier novels. The plot, for example, where Raman, the painter of signs of the title, obsessively pursues Daisy, a woman who has dedicated herself with missionary zeal to the national issue of the seventies - overpopulation - reminds us of *Waiting for the Mahatama*, where,, we remember, the protagonist Sriram is drawn inexorably to the zealot Bharati. If Bharati is inspired by the Mahatama. Daisy is a soldier in the cause of family planning promoted by Indira and Sanjoy Gandhi. Sriram's encounter with the planter Matheison in the earlier novel is clearly alluded to in this one through the book about the Anglo-Indian planter that Raman

reads. Throughout the novel, Narayan has Raman brood on philosophical as well as topical issues in the manner of Srinivas of *Mr. Sampath*. The name Daisy, of course, echoes the equally "modern" sounding Rosy of *The Guide* and contrasts with Savitri of *The Dark Room*. She, we recall, had to go back to the confines of her house unlike them.

It is a measure of Narayan's assessment of the progress made by women in India since freedom from British rule that he can portray Daisy at the end of *The Painter of Signs* as insisting on her independence and rejecting Raman, unlike Savitri, who goes back to her philandering husband, and even Bharati, who accepts the single-minded Sriram. As Shanta Krishnaswamy has emphasized in her feminist reading of the novel, " Daisy Paints Her Signs Otherwise": "It is an act of courage, not only on her part but also on the part of the novelist, given the granite harshness of Brahmin orthodoxy in the Malgudian context" (Krishnaswamy 123). Krishnaswamy no doubt overstates her case in her enthusiasm for Daisy the woman warrior, but Sadhana Allison Puranik in her fine essay, "*The Painter of Signs* : Breaking of Frontier" also notes the "radical overturning of convention" depicted through the character of Daisy, even though she is also able to see " the enigma of Narayan's outlook" which allows him to juxtapose his subversiveness with "his love of traditional elements of Indian life and art" (Puranik, 132). More critical than Krishnaswamy of Daisy's fanaticism about family planning and population control, Puranik finds Narayan making a political statement through her : "By linking Daisy with Mrs. Gandhi's India, Narayan implicitly criticize the attitude of cultural extremism apparent in the government's domestic policies"(129).

Daisy's extremism, however, is not the only indication in *The Painter of Signs* of major transformations in Malgudi's social fabric and physical features. For instance, we are given glimpses of college students who are "admirers of hippie philosophies" (*Painter*, 10). The narrator informs us how the town and its environs "was changing in 1972" (12). Raman broods on corruption and other aspects of his world which cause him anxiety. On the other hand, the drive for reform, of which family planning is manifestation, is also a cause of tension, as is the state-imposed Emergency. There is much more explicit sexuality everywhere, and *The Painter of Signs* itself is explicit about sex to a degree unprecedented in Narayan's novels. Also, people, in this world appear driven by a desire for cash as never before.

At the same time, Narayan also reminds us that the India of century-old traditions has not disappeared despite Daisy and other signs of modern times. He thus juxtaposes Daisy's radicalism with the puritanism of Raman's aunt who will not be shaken in her belief about the duties assigned to women in the shastras and who takes off for the holy sites of the Himalayas at the end. Narayan himself, it has been argued, goes back to legends once more for a scaffold for his story of the ultramodern woman : Raman is like King Santhanu in chasing Daisy who reenacts the part of the goddess he was infatuated with. She, the legends narrate, "kills her own children, "even as "Daisy in her modern incarnation, preaches population control" (King 181).

In a crucial encounter, almost midway in the novel, Daisy meets her match in hermit in a remote village and is shaken by his insight into her past. For a while, it appears as if the liberated, contemporary woman cannot stand upto the holy man of traditions. Nevertheless, we need to note that the holy man turns on her because he feels threatened by her success in spreading the message about birth control. Also, Raman detects in the hermit an immoral strain and a strange note of aggression when he asks him questions about the women who came to his cave to be cured of barrenness. Moreover, in this far-off village, it becomes obvious, Daisy in winning converts amongst women. Narayan, in other words, is indicating that even in the margins of society exemplified by the village and its womenfolk where Daisy is somewhat vulnerable, she is not by any means unsuccessful. He is not willing to have the hermit have the last word or have Daisy humiliated or viewed as an example of deviant feminity, although her extremism is never in doubt. On the contrary, it is to Narayan's credit that he is able to show through her unwavering commitment to her cause how in independent India spaces had opened up for women like Daisy which allowed them public roles so that they could endeavour to transform themselves and the lot of women in general.[6] As Dennis Wilder has emphasized in his recent book, *Post-Colonial Literatures in english* : Narayan treats Daisy with sympathy and shows the women of contemporary India supporting reforms, thereby characteristically reversing a stereotype (Wilder 101). Wilder's discussion of the novel is also useful because it draws our attention to Narayan's strategy of depicting the "competing ideologies of its time" (101) and the pressures they bring to bear on individuals , and because he is thereby able to contend for "the disturbing relevancy of the book in the post-colonial context" (102).

III

Reading Narayan's early novels postcolonially, then, takes us to stories of Indians living under colonial rule, molded by it in some instances, resisting it in others. His novels become valuable from this perspective because they present an India and Indians not represented in Anglo-Indian fiction. They also depict a region and people transformed decisively by over a century of colonial rule. As we have seen, taken in sequence the early works constitute a portrait of a colonial upbringing - the protagonists of *Swami and Friends*. *The Bachelor of Arts*, and *The English Teacher* may have different names but they reflect successive phases of growing up under British rule. In these novels and the first few novels Narayan wrote after independence, we get fairly detailed representations of Indian society in the last days of the Raj. To the postcolonial reader, these novels in general register the impact of British rule and Indian resistance while *Waiting for the Mahatama* in particular deal with the movement for independence inspired by Gandhi. This book and subsequent ones are important too because they fictionalize Indians coming to terms with independence and contemplating the legacy of Gandhi in a free country. We have noticed too that Narayan writes his novels amount other reasons, to explore postcolonial responsibility and record disappointments in building up the nation. Narayan also uses his novels to reveal Indians pursuing alternative models of nation-building. Taken as a whole, we have found that the novels consistently reflect the tensions created in Malgudi society because of the impact of modernization and deal with the appeal of, as well as the resistance to, westernization. The Narayan that this postcolonial reading has come up with is thus one who registers the inevitability of change and one who has an ambiguous and complex stance on tradition and modernity, subverting orthodoxy in some instances and showing his acceptance of timeless Indian ways in others. This is a Narayan who can set up oppositions such as that between purity and hybridity, only to unsettle them. At the same time, we have seen Narayan going back to Indian myths and beliefs to structure his tales of postcolonial India in a conscious bid to utilize indigenous moulds for his fiction. On the other hand, he will project through a novel like *The Painter of Signs* a character such as Daisy who appears determined to take India into the future.

In short, a postcolonial reading of Narayan offers us a novelist consistently dialogizing through his fiction changes in Indian society under

the impact of colonial rule and westernizing. In addition, a postcolonial reading of his novels shows a Narayan who does not habitually pit himself against such changes, but represents transformations in society and consciousness as inevitable and, in some cases, even desirable. Reading Narayan postcolonially, we could also say, makes us see a Narayan writing with historic specificity about competing visions of India in his novels without committing himself to either a reactionary or radical position, although in the final analysis he comes off as more progressive than he is often made out be. A writer such as Naipaul who suggests that Narayan reacts to change either with despair or withdrawal and prefers quietism, or a critic like Richard Cronin, who accuses the Indian writer of "a deep-rooted conservatism, a comprehensive hostility to change" (Cronin 59), or the politically correct Rosemary Marangoly George and the radical feminist postcolonial Spivak who would perhaps endorse this interpretation of Narayan, I hope I have been able to demonstrate, have got it wrong : Narayan is a writer whose strength, specifically, is providing nuanced views of societies emerging from colonial rule to postcoloniality.

Notes and References

1. Narayan himself never appeared to have harboured doubts about writing in English. In addition to calling it one of India's language in the essay from *A writer's Nightmare* quoted above, he has offered us a very "postcolonial account of the legitimacy of English in India elsewhere in the volume: "We have fostered the language for over a century and we are entitled to bring it in line with our own habit of though and idiom" (179).
2. This of course, is very much like the theme Narayan himself will take up in his seventh novel. *Waiting for the Mahatama*, as we shall see a little later.
3. Compare V.S. Naipaul's very different reading of this passage in *India: A Wounded Civilization* (17). Naipaul is not prepared to allow that Narayan treats Srinivas with Irony and that we should therefore have a more complex attitude to his musings than Srinivas himself.
4. As a reader of Naipaul's assessment of *Mr. Sampath* in *India : A Wounded Civilization* will have already realized, I have disagreed with his interpretation of that novel too (Naipaul, 13-19)
5. *The Painter of Signs* also looks forward to Narayan's recent novel *My Grandmother's*

Tale (1992) and gives us our first glimpse of the plot of this novella. Moreover, the hermit of the novel who stumps Daisy by relating her past clearly resembles the guru of *A Tiger for Malgudi* (1983) : the story of the shaming of the tiger by the yogi which is part of that novel is first narrated to Raman in this one.

6. I have chosen to end my survey of Narayan's work from a postcolonial perspective with *The Painter of Signs* even though it is by no means his last novel because it is obvious to me that there is a narrowing of his range in his subsequent works. *A Tiger for Malgudi* (1983), for example, constricts itself by giving us the tiger's perspective on life in the forest, the circus, and with a holy man, charming and wise though it is. The slightness of *Talkative Man* (186) precludes the possibility of the complexity with which Narayan treats his themes in the fuller works. *The World of Nagaraj* (1990) in a full-length work but it too is restricted in scope. And *Grandmother's Tale* (1992), the last of his novels that I have been able to access, despite being set in the period of the East India Company's rule, is quite narrowly focussed on a family legend.

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Walter Benjamin and a Poetics of the Postcolonial Lyric

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In this paper I propose a relation of affinity between post-colonial poetry and ideas developed by Benjamin in his early work. In its most abstract sense, the post-colonial is a name for certain forms of historical displacement through which a subjected self struggles to relocate itself in space, time, body and language and of similar displacements Benjamin had ample and painful personal experience. In the present context, the argument confines itself to poetry which works out a dialectical tension between the forms of allegory and myth, and my examples are drawn from the poetry of islands, where an island is treated as an abyss into which time falls as history, which it is the poet's task to bridge, as exemplified in the work of Derek Walcott.

For Europe after the Renaissance, the dream of colonization was a myth of progress based on dominative exploitation dissembled as the civilizing mission of Enlightenment. In *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944), Horkheimer and Adorno wrote of the 'indefatigable self-destructiveness of enlightenment' as related to the destructive aspect of progress' (*Dialectic* xi).[1] Throughout the era of modern colonialism, progress was experienced, by the complicitous among the colonized, as access to the colonizer's language and culture, although this dispossessed them progressively of whatever had been their original language and culture, thus creating—in the words of Derek Walcott—'one literature in several imperial languages' (*An* 15-6).[2] The subjugation of linguistic and cultural heterogeneity into a unity under the constellation of colonialism provides an ironic parallel in reverse to the process described by Benjamin as the movement of the plurality of languages, through translation, to a pure language' which would be the 'the messianic end of their history' (*SW* 257).[3] Insofar as the post-colonial becomes selfaware of his double legacy of loss-in-gain, he is like Benjamin's angel of history, propelled by the storm of progress 'into the future to which his back is

turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skywards' (*Reflections* 258).[4] For the post-colonial, the debris is less the ruin of a totality from the past than the recession of unified being into the future, a fiction of unity never to be recuperated except in terms of a fragmented plurality. 'I see Africa multiple and whole' ('*Je vois l'Afrique multiple et une*'), wrote Aime Césaire, who grew up speaking Creole as his first language, but wrote creatively in French (*Césaire* 353).[5] In Benjaminian terms, the post-colonial mourns. What he mourns, in this version of the Fall, is the loss of correspondence between himself as the created product of history and the original linguistic culture from which his history has separated him. In Benjamin, man is the namer who gives linguistic expression to the dumb things of nature. In the colonial condition, man splits into the named (who is rendered mute like a thing of nature) and the namer (who, in 'overnaming' his Other, displaces the Other's languages by his own). The life of the named, like that of the things of nature, is condemned to mourning because they are mute; they are mute because they mourn: mourning and muteness circle round the sense of abject degradation and guilt brought on by being more an object to be read rather than a subject who can read and name. The post-colonial condition adds a new twist to this dialectic. The mourning ceases to be mute, because it learns to allegorize in the given language, and what it thus demystifies is the myth of origin, including the fable of the fall in which its choice of language traps it.

Thus the melancholic of Benjamin's allegory can be said to correspond to the condition of the post-colonial in a number of relations: 1) the loss of a pure language; 2) the split into plurality, fragmentation, and linguistic secondariness; 3) guilt and muteness; 4) the compulsion to read allegorically what cannot be named unconcealedly. Each correspondence can be illustrated with reference to a poet like Derek Walcott, who reiterates the idea that the things of the world exist in nature more truly when their linguistic being is spoken. One of his poems treats the Caribbean as inconceivable because 'no one had yet written of this landscape / that it was possible' (*CP* 195).[6] In another poem, his boyhood is spoken of as a time 'when I was a noun / gently exhaled from the palate of the sunrise' (*Om* 12).[7] The poet is an Adam whose task is 'giving things their names'(*CP* 294), although the poet can also envisage a condition prior to that of being named:

> My race began as the sea began,
> with no nouns ... (*CP* 305)

This state of pre-history is imaged as 'the bridesleep that soothed Adam in paradise, / before it gaped into a wound' (*Om* 42). History begins, for the Caribbean, with the shadow cast by an act of overnaming—colonialism. Benjamin claimed that 'Fate is the entelechy of events within the field of guilt' (*Tr* 129).[8] Likewise, the entelechy of names in a field of guilt is what the postcolonial learns to recognize as history. In this condition of fealty, to write is to take the task of naming a self into one's own hands. For the post-colonial poet the task is to find new names for the self. He finds, however, that he can only do this by dis-membering and re-membering the old ones.

The post-colonial in Walcott asks himself a question: 'Who will teach us a history of which we too are capable?' (*Om* 197). The first and enforced—part of the answer is colonialism. What survives as the aftermath of that epoch is the debris of memory, 'History's nostalgia' (*Om* 228). The second—and paradoxical—part of the answer is the difficult task of melting down history, so that life after history can begin, as if before history, in willed acts of memorable forgetting. When Walcott's Odysseus says to Nausicaa, 'The future is where we begin', she asks 'Is this just a dream?', and he replies 'No. A place where dreams are killed' (*Ody* 59).[9] Once the dreams that are the nightmare of history have died, the life of wakefulness begins, in which the poet resumes his Adamic task.

Like Benjamin's baroque, in which 'chronological movement is grasped and analysed in a spatial image' (*Tr* 92), the islands of his native Caribbean provide Derek Walcott, in his Nobel Prize acceptance speech, with an allegorical image for history in the form of amnesia, which is the ruin of memory: 'All of the Antilles, every island, is an effort of memory; every mind, every racial biography culminating in amnesia and fog' (*An* 30). Benjamin identified the semblance of history for the baroque as the transience of nature in the form of decay (*Tr* 177-78). Walcott uses identical terms for the history of 'the writer's habit' in the Caribbean: a 'sense of elegy, of loss, even of degenerative mimicry' (*An* 5), and 'melancholy as contagious as the fever of a sunset' (*An* 22). Europe had taught Caribbeans to see themselves as 'No people. Fragments and echoes of real people, unoriginal and broken' (*An* 6). In these *Tristes Tropiques*, 'The sigh of History rises over ruins' (*An* 7). But Walcott refuses 'to see such emptiness as desolation' (*An* 16). In his oppositional dialectic, the figure of ruins is opposed by an antithetical 'delight of conviction, not loss' (*An* 5): 'For every poet it is always morning in the world. History a forgotten, insomniac night ... the fate of poetry is to fall in love with the world, in spite of history' (*An* 27-8). This idea has its analogue in

the notion of 'Messianic nature' developed by Benjamin in relation to the paradox 'of this eternally transient worldly existence': 'the rhythm of Messianic nature is happiness. For nature is Messianic by reason of its eternal and total passing away' (*Reflections* 313). In Walcott's version of Messianic amnesia, the ocean 'was an epic where every line was erased / yet freshly written in sheets of exploding surf' (*Om* 295-96).

The idea of time as the degenerative history of nature is thus resisted by the happiness of the timeless 'reality of light, of work, of survival' in the landscape (*An* 19): 'It is not that History is obliterated by this sunrise. It is there in Antillean geography' (*An* 29). What the islands of the Caribbean offer is 'Not nostalgic sites but occluded sanctities as common and simple as their sunlight'. The poet declares 'I am not re-creating Eden' (*An* 19); nevertheless, he is now again a namer, and 'this process of renaming, of finding new metaphors, is the same process that the poet faces every morning of his working day, making his own tools like Crusoe, assembling nouns from necessity' (*An* 11). The necessity of literalness in translation was explained by Benjamin in terms of the 'Fragments of a vessel that are to be glued together .... recognizable as fragments of a greater language...' (*SW* 260). The image is echoed by Walcott:

> Break a vase, and the love that reassembles the fragments is stronger than that love which took its symmetry for granted when it was whole.... Antillean art is this restoration of our shattered histories, our shards of vocabulary, our archipelago becoming a synonym for pieces broken off from the original continent. (*An* 8-9)

The task of the poet is defined by Benjamin, in the early essay on 'Two Poems by Holderlin' (*SW* 18-36), as having to 'transform the figures borrowed from a neutral "life" into members of a mythic order' (*SW* 28), not to myth but rather ... to mythic connections, which in the work of art are shaped into unique, unmythological, and unmythic forms' (*SW* 35). This is to be accomplished by the mediation of what is called the poetized (or the poematized): *das Gedichtete*. David Wellerby comments that '*das Gedichtete* comes about as an overcoming of the mythic, a negation of the mythic conflict in a structure that brings that conflict ... to rest' (Wellerby 50).'[10] The mythic figure of Odysseus might be

said to offer the post-colonial poet just such a form for allegory to negate: the subservience of the borrowing is sublated in what is done with the borrowing. The mythic is taken as if with an aura already worn; which is then reworked into a new recuperative allegory. The depletion of mere borrowing is acknowledged laconically by Walcott (*CP* 297). The material content recovered from the figure of Odysseus is his growth through history into 'this man to whom everything has happened' (*Ody* 80). In Walcott's stage adaption of *The Odyssey* (1993) the hero is a figure of longing. Through his allegorization, dispossession is retrieved as belonging: 'Our ribbed bodies long for their original shore' (*Ody* 5). His epic involvement in war is dismissed as 'A tower cracking, Troy, Troy! What was it all worth?' He would readily 'give up all this heaving for one yard of earth' (*Ody* 39). The allegorical significance of the passages of Odysseus is explained to him by Athena as an equation between home and peace, 'The harbour of home is what your wanderings mean.... The peace which, in shafts of light, the gods allow men?' (*Ody* 159). While Walcott's *Odyssey* tends toward the literal in metaphorical translation, his quasi-epic *Omeros* (1990) is more fully transpositional. In *Omeros* the mythic is treated anti-mythically, almost as an antidote to the disease of memory, and also as a magical 'exorcism' of Homer (*Om* 294). The persons of the poem are extrapolations:

> ... I said "Omeros,"
> and O was the conch-shell's invocaton, *mer* was
> both mother and sea in our Antillean patois,
> *os*, a grey bone, and the white surf as it crashes
> and spreads its sibilant collar on a lace shore. (*Om* 14)

What the poet looks for in the structure of events in time is a place of possibility, as something potential which must be realized:

> not on this grass cliff but somewhere on the other side of the world,
> somewhere, with its sunlit islands,
> where what they called history could not happen. Where?
> Where could this world renew the Mediterranean's
> innocence? (*Om* 28)

Odysseus, for the post-colonial poet, is the heroic and tragic figure for the possibility and deferral of fulfilment in whom man will recover nature erased of history, return through narrative to a place where time tells nothing, and the recurrence of the mythic can be disbanded. In *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Horkheimer and Adorno described the nucleus of 'all civilizing rationality' as a form of 'mythic irrationality':

In class history, the enmity of the self to sacrifice implied a sacrifice of the self, inasmuch as it was paid for by a denial of nature in man for the sake of domination over non-human nature and over other men. This very denial, the nucleus of all civilizing rationality, is the germ cell of a proliferating mythic irrationality: with the denial of nature in man not merely the *telos* of the outward control of nature but the *telos* of man's own life is distorted and befogged. (*Dialectic* 54)

> What the poets of the post-colonial condition try to create, as in Walcott, is a renewed dialectical tension between man and nature, and nature and history, which may be described as the denial of a denial, poetry's attempt to reverse 'mythic irrationality' through the antidote of renewed allegory."[11]

Notes and References

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[7] Derek Walcott, *Omeros*. London & Boston: Faber & Faber, 1990.

[8] Walter Benjamin, *The Ongins of German Tragic Drama*, tr. John Osborne, with an introduction by George Steiner. London: Verso, 1977, 1985.

[9] Derek Walcott, *The Odyssey: A Stage Version*. London & Boston: Faber & Faber, 1993.

[10] David E. Wellerby, 'Benjamin's Theory of the Lyric', in *Benjamin's Ground: New Readings of Walter Benjamin*, ed. Rainer Nägele. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1988, pp. 39-59.

[11] 'The antidote to myth is to be demonstrated in allegory', Benjamin (*Gesammelte Schriften* 1: 677), quoted in Winfried Menninghaus, 'Walter Benjamin's Theory of Myth', *On Walter Benjamin: Criticals Essays and Recollections*, edited by Gary Smith. Cambridge, Massachusetts & London: The MIT Press, 1988, p. 314.

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Articulating East: Ideology, Censorship and Contemporary English Writing in Singapore[1]

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The days of the mandatory hair cut at the airport, the more recent decision to ban chewing gum, international incidents such as those involving the caning of Michael Fay for spray painting cars - all these and much more are routinely invoked by the west to demonstrate the puritanical and paternalistic attitude of those who govern Singapore. These examples legitimise a form of self-congratulatory response by the west to denigrate the repressive don't-spare-the-rod principle of governance in that country. While the implied opposition between freedom and authoritarianism in such a stance is not without a measure of validity, irony and caricature are also ways of coming to terms with or understanding the notion that cultural protectionism and benevolent dictatorship - if such a term makes sense at all - in the country have in fact worked to effect an economic miracle, although there isn't a consensus about the price paid for the success. On the one hand if economic prosperity, political stability, universal education, a very low crime rate etc. serve as a yardstick, Singapore's achievement during the last three decades is nothing short of astounding. On the other, as critics have often pointed out, if these have been gained at the cost of freedom, creativity and spontaneity, if these have led to the notion of a rugged and pragmatic society that is unsure of its own identity, then it is neither desirable nor stable in the long run. In short, according to the critics, however successful the country is in economic terms, it has achieved its success at a moral and spiritual cost, and we are right in our assumption that we are better off in the west. Alternatively, for those countries that have found themselves in economic decline and political chaos, Singapore serves as a model of harmony and a reminder of what they might have been. The objective of this essay is to

explore in some detail the implications of this ambivalence, particularly in relation to the pervasive presence of a state-sponsored ideology, censorship and contemporary writing in English.

At the very outset, one needs to reinforce that the economic success is in itself quite spectacular. For a city state of approximately 230 square miles with very little resources and a population of 3 million people, the rags-to-riches story in the last thirty years is particularly impressive. Even Joseph Tamney, an outspoken academic whose work is extremely critical of the ideology of the country, admits that "the average Singaporean now makes more money than an Irish or British citizen, and if buying power is considered by adjusting national income figures for the cost of living, then Singaporeans also live better than residents of France and Canada" (1).This achievement is even more striking because the country has achieved this prosperity while skirting the ethnic and religious problems that several postcolonial countries have faced, despite the multi-racial, multi-lingual and multi-religious society that it accommodates. A nation so diverse with one group comprising more than 75% of the population attempting to create a collective consciousness is a sure recipe for civil unrest, rabid nationalism, narrow configurations of national identity, all of which have been encountered in other countries close to Singapore and in South Asia. It is hardly surprising that leaders of this tiny country often draw comparisons with other South Asian and Southeast Asian countries as examples of what might happen if the government did not prevent the possibility of unrest by maintaining a strict and vigilant control of what is permissible.

Lest we think of the multiracial situation in utopian terms, it must be admitted that ethnic and racial tension exists below the surface. It is alluded to in conversations, in incidental remarks, in fears about employment, real or imagined - but then it would have been unnatural if it hadn't been the case. Tamney points to several moments when the government itself clearly foregrounded Chinese values as the backbone to cultural stability. As he puts it: "racial policies simply follow from the leader's understanding of Singapore's history: The nation's success is a result of the influence of Chinese culture. That is to say, ethnic revitalization is meant primarily to preserve Chinese culture" (97). And he concludes on the note that "reinforcing racial identities is bound to undermine other efforts meant to create racial

harmony" (103). The tensions have been, however, kept strictly under control, and state intervention in cultural affairs is geared to diffuse the possibility of the escalation of these tensions. For those of us who are mindful of what is happening in countries like Sri Lanka, Singapore's "no-nonsense" policy towards ethnicity and its decision to preserve four official languages cannot be ignored. When the claim is made that the People's Action Party, with Lee Kuan Yew at the helm, ensured that Singapore would "remain a multi-cultural, multi-lingual and multi-religious society for long, with each ethnic segment - the Chinese, the Malays, the Indians, and the others - enjoying autonomy and equality of status in the cultures, languages and religions" (Vasil 38) one needs to recognize that this claim is not mere rhetoric. The foregrounding of Confucianism and Chinese culture is a part of a larger project involving the balance of the private and the public, and it could be argued that the emphasis on Chinese values is not simply a matter of racial bias. It grows out of a profound uneasiness about the nation's origins, about a syncretism that needs to be both acknowledged and denied by the country as a whole. As Ang and Stratton point out, "while the East/West divide is a discursive construction which has its origins in Western thought that enabled and legitimated European colonialism and imperialism, it now ciruculates among élites in the East as well, where it is inflected and articulated in ways suitable for their own purposes" (68). Thus the need to celebrate a Chinese ontology arises out of the urgency to counter the threat of Western liberalism which, with its emphasis on individualism, the leaders argue, could well destabilize the harmony that is so carefully maintained in the country. According to Kirpal Singh, "right now, a major concern is the worry ... that if the citizens of Singapore are not careful and vigilant enough their continuous progress is going to be threatened by the liberal and even decadent practices of the West" ("Cosmopolitanism" 1).

Singapore is thus a difficult country to categorize, and increasingly difficult to link with its immediate neighbour, Malaysia, with which it shares significant historical connections and from which it separated in 1965. In literary studies, one tends to think of the two countries as being one entity, an assumption justified by history and by the older writers who spanned both worlds. Now, however, Malaysia appears to have taken the more predictable path to decolonization, as it moved from the enthusiasm of freedom from colonial rule and dreams of pluralism to a nativist assertion of national identity

based on ethnic patterns, historical origins and religious claims. As a consequence, although some of the finest writing did come from the country in the works of Lloyd Fernando, Wong Phui Num, K.S. Maniam and Lee Kok Liang, these writers now have little support from the state or from readers to continue their work. They work sporadically, in isolation, aware that the shift to Malay has had very negative consequences on their own writing.[2]

If Singapore has avoided this path, it is largely due to the government's policing of every aspect of the country's life. From watching television to family planning, from celebrating religious functions to being courteous to one's neighbours, the guidance of the state is evident in a non-coercive, rational and emphatic manner. As John Clammer comments, "this paternalism pervades not only government-people relationship, but is reflected and reproduced throughout the social system - in the bureaucracy, the educational system, the running of the public enterprises and even at the supposedly grass-roots Community Centres level" (111). Referring specifically to the issue of national security, a character in Gopal Baratham's *A Candle or the Sun* (1991) tells the gullible Hern: "Did they never tell you that on this island paradise of ours trade is a matter of security, health is a matter of security, how you wash your underwear is a matter of security? (104)

In Singpare, the ideology of the state clearly demarcates that the public sphere be conditioned by technology, by economic advancement, by western modes of production while the private domain be enclosed by Asian values. Singapore did not begin with this duality - in fact in the late 1950s and early 60s there was a desire to privilege local languages and jettison its colonial past. The leaders, however, soon felt that if the country were to hold its own against developed nations, it had to do so by encouraging the use of English, supporting technology and trade. But to do so while ignoring the cultural claims of a heterogeneous population would transform the population into mimic people (to borrow Naipaul's phrase). Hence the carefully orchestrated split between the public and the private. Such a split is hardly new in a colonial context, but in Singapore this duality becomes official policy in order to ensure that all citizens, for instance, are bilingual - their mother tongue ensuring the continuity of their Asian values while English, as the medium of instruction, advances their ability to compete with

western nations. While the wisdom or the practicality of such an enforced binary is open to debate, it has had the effect of promoting a community that uses English with a great degree of competence.

Singapore is probably one of the few nations in that region where the majority of the population do not claim English as their mother tongue but where the use of English has increased significantly, although it is, at least at the level of popular culture, tending to evolve into a "nation language" called Singlish, a form that uses the structure of English but combines it with the syntactical patterns and vocabulary of Chinese, Malay and Tamil. Because of the decision to retain English as an official language, the publication of poetry and fiction has been consistent, although not all the writing, like elsewhere, is particularly good. Singapore is also, unlike, say, India or the Caribbean, unable to claim diasporic writers as part of its repertoire of writers. Except for a few, such as Goh Poh Seng in Vancouver, not many writers have written from outside. This again is strange, particularly because of the careful monitoring of literature that has been a consistent issue in the life of the country.

The country hasn't produced an Achebe or a Walcott, for reasons that are probably historical, but it has produced a large number of serious and exciting writers. Ideally, the heterogeneity of the country should have produced great literature. Its curious status as a nation that has no indigenous past but legitimately claims a primordial ancestry should have led to imaginative and experimental forms of writing. And the government's acknowledgement of multiple traditions should have helped. But it was a multiplicity about which the thinking was done by the state, and to flout that openly was hardly prudent. As Singh rightly maintains, "the exigencies of living in a very small, pluralistic society hinder the frank expression of views and ideas. One is never sure when one may be called to task for having uttered, stated, or explored an issue deemed to be sensitive"(11).

Writing has been, however, not in short supply. Koh Tai Ann speaks of more than 23 novels between 1972 and 1989, not to mention the plays, the volumes of poetry, and the short story collections (279). The country was receptive to poetry as New Zealand was receptive to the short story, and here again critics like Kirpal Singh have tried to explain the popularity of poetry in relation to the materialistic goals of the city state. According to him,

"Singapore favours short forms of literary expression because the whole manner of living and working is not calculated to leave enough room or energy for the production or consumption of works needing long and sustained effort" (9).

Among the poets, Edwin Thumboo is, as one critic has rightly maintained, probably as close as one would think of a poet laureate of the country. He started writing in the fifties and his most recent collection *The Third Map* brings together the best of his work. Other poets such as Robert Yeo, Arthur Yap, Lee Tzu Pheng and Kirpal Singh have in their own ways, made a substantial contribution, but Thumboo remains the most important figure, although critics like Jan Gordon have questioned the significance of his work.

Gordon writes about him, among others, and the point he makes about the derivative and unauthentic quality of Singapore writing becomes evident in an illustrative stanza from one of Thumboo's poems.

I have sailed many waters,
Skirted islands of fire,
Contended with Circe
Who loved the squeal of pigs;
Passed Scylla and Charybdis
To seven years with Calypso,
Heaved in battle with the gods.
Beneath it all
I kept faith in Ithaca, travelled,
Travelled and travelled,
Suffering much, enjoying little;
Met strange people singing
New myths; made myths myself.
(*Third Map* 81)

The poem as a whole is flawless in its control of form, is sure sense of rhythm, its capacity to blend the symbolic and the meditative. Thumboo's poetry that would find its place with the best of "mainstream" poetry, not because it is imitative, but because it draws its strength from a tradition that is almost entirely western. Gordon, who discusses "Ulysses at the Merlion" at some length, concludes by saying that "Thumboo's poems often appear

derivative even when they are not; a certain 'Anglo' quality seems grafted on in much the way the English language itself is in Singapore" (47). And for many of the writers this doffing of the cap is the inevitable result of a political and cultural situation that is "colonial" in its westernization and restrictive in its expression of national identity. Thumboo's poetry is not always celebratory and some of his finest poems are about expectations gone awry, but his criticism has been of a general kind, directed at human and moral issues rather than ones that are systemic.

The notion of promoting national identity seems innocuous enough, until one realizes its destructive potential in many postcolonial nations, including Singapore. Singh, for instance, sees it as a twin-dilemma: "how to achieve unity in diversity and how to become modern without shedding tradition?" ("Cosmopolitanism" 2) Translated into ethnic terms in a country that houses Chinese, Malays, Indians and Eurasians, the binary is both complex and potentially problematic. In practice, censorship involves constant intervention by the state through an interlocking system that begins with politics and extends to cultural and social life. And in the delicate balance it maintains, literature is recognized as a potential threat, particularly writing in English. Gordon, writing in 1984, says that the writer "is an elitist in the sense that he is highly educated and that he belongs to a very small sector of the population, that 5.2% who speak English well enough and with enough emotional comfort to use it at home" (44). Now the situation has changed considerably with a dramatic increase in both writing and the reading public, and the writer has the potential to be subversive, particularly because of his/her international audience, and the state feels it necessary to keep an eye on what is produced to ensure that it does not deride state policy.[3]

The notion of censorship brings to mind the conditions that existed in South Africa and all that has been written about the pernicious effects of censorship on a whole generation of writers in that country. In the critical writings of Nadine Gordimer, J.M. Coetzee and Andre Brink for instance, one sees the magnitude of the effects of censorship. But a comparison between the two countries is also likely to be misleading. Generalizing about censorship on the basis of the practice of the government, Brink for instance maintains that "censorship is invariably imposed by an authoritarian regime uncertain of its own chances of survival" (240). This certainly is hardly the

case in Singapore where despite the long period of PAP rule and the swiftness with which opposition is dealt with, there is a general awareness that the PAP has in fact worked with the country's welfare in mind and has secured for the people a standard of living that is the envy of neighbouring countries. But Brink is right in claiming that "censorship is an integral part of a much larger and more complicated phenomenon" (236). Singapore does not target anyone in particular for control, but it certainly makes it clear to everybody what is off-limits.

A case in point here is the episode involving the writer Catherine Lim in 1994 when she published two essays in the *Straits Times* calling attention to the authoritarian style of the government. She claimed that the politicians were being paid too much and that the public did not really like them. The response to this by the prime minister and Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew, who by inviting the writer to either to "practice politics" or leave it alone, made it very clear that such comments were not taken lightly by the government (See Tamney 73-74). And Lim at that point withdrew from the debate. Here is an example of the manner in which the government makes it clear that they have a job to do and must be allowed to do it without distractions from the wings.

It must also be stressed that censorship in Singapore is not exercised by cultural or religious bodies outside the government. There isn't, for instance, as in Sri Lanka or India, a strong religious base that is not directly involved with politics but is an active participant in the framing of national identity. Such enclaves that have power over the masses and are in a position to dictate to the writer what is permissible and what is not does not hold good for Singapore, although public pressure about what is acceptable cannot be ignored altogether. The main control, however, lies with the government and its multiple agencies of control.

In matters pertaining to writing and performance censorship exists in the form of a Board that looks at all the literature that is written. It does not forbid publication; in fact no book has been banned before publication, but the vetting process is such that certain kinds of writing are pointed out as being unacceptable. In Gopal Baratham's novel, *A Candle or the Sun*, the would-be writer Hern receives a visit from Sam, who works

for the Ministry of Culture. This is what Sam tells Hern:You're not even a member of the Singapore Guild of Writers, Hern," he said lapsing into everyday speech. "My ministry people don't get a chance to look at your work or advise you about it. The first time we see your stuff is when it's published in some foreign magazine.... We are here to guide you,Hern.To help you get your thoughts into the proper social context.... We would never interfere with the actual craft of writing, mind you. You say things your own way. The artist must remain free" (17-18).

It is here that the subtlety of the scene in Singapore becomes clear. Areas not to be dealt with include language, race, ethnicity and religion, for to allow diverse opinions along these lines would be to encourage sectarian disharmony. Catherine Lim mentions how she once wrote a story involving an Indian man who is wrongly accused of raping a Chinese girl. Subsequently a secondary school adapted the story for a play, with one difference in that they changed the Indian man to a Chinese man. When asked why the change was made, she was told that "race was a sensitive issue. Minority groups might feel offended" (Lim 40). She adds: "Any topic that could be construed as even remotely touching upon issues of race, language and religion in this multiethnic society is likely to be self-censored out at manuscript stage" (39).

This, then, is the peculiar situation of the writer who enjoys, like all the citizens, a relatively high standard of living, and bears witness to a system where efficiency is the norm, but one which allows little criticism of politics or culture. If culture cannot be avoided, then guidelines exist for determining what is off-limits for the writer. The effect has been, as Lim maintains, one of self-censorship, and this in turn has far-reaching effects. As J.M. Coetzee rightly says: "When certain kinds of writing and speech, even certain thoughts, become surreptitious activities, then the paranoia of the state is on its way to being reproduced in the psyche of the subject, and the state can look forward to a future in which the bureaucracies of supervision can be allowed to wither away, their function have been, in effect, privatized" (35). In a general sense, this process of internalization has in fact occurred in Singapore where such rigorous self-discipline is very much part of the psyche of the citizens. Catherine Lim's story entitled "The Malady and the Cure" (*O Singpore*, 1989) about civil servants who, on the weekends, make a trip to malaysia, to a designated area that has been leased by Singapore, and spit and swear and drink as much as they like before returning

to Singapore as model citizens, is in fact an illustration of this mentality, this constant need to come to terms with repression.

To what extent has the literary circle internalized this cultural system is not always clear. Gordon, who, admittedly, takes an extreme position, maintains in his polemical piece that the arbitrariness with which barriers have been maintained has vitiated the literature, leading to the creation of what is, at best imitative material. Whether English as a hybrid medium serves to perpetuate the values of colonialism or reinforce the model of national development espoused by the PAP, the effect, according to him, has been the production of second-rate literature. Writing specifically about an anthology of poetry entitled *The Second Tongue*, he says: "The Poets of *The Second Tongue* enjoy a privileged relationship with the government in power, while at the same time the very marginality of the language in the Singapore "living" context restrains any adversary political venturesomeness. By deconstructing what is in effect their first tongue into an illusion of its secondariness, these poets create a special place for themselves as a small group with a small audience in a tiny country, which protects them from international class literary criticism ..." (64). The charge is hardly fair, and it certainly dismisses that powerful poetry of Lee Tzu Pheng and Arthur Yap, for instance, but the issues he raises continue to be relevant.

Gordon's main concern is with language, but the real concerns go much further, of writers being aware that they enjoy a measure of freedom in dealing with their own ethnic and cultural group and need to be more circumspect with others. Writers are increasingly concerned with the packaging of culture, which leaves little room for the imaginative exploration of complex issues. Philip Jeyaretnam maintains that "the temptation on the part of the government to interfere, to shape and direct, must be resisted. A lively culture cannot be created by decree. It must depend upon the participation of individuals ..." (94). The playwright Stella Kon says: "one day we may bury the image of the 'ugly Singaporean'. In this place we would have the 'artistic Singaporean', less materialistic, less self-centred, sensitive to other people's needs" (104).

It has been argued that the issue of censorship has been deflected in the last several years in order to preoccupy itself with matters pertaining

to sexuality. As Geraldine Heng and Janadas Devan point out, "debate about film classifications, for example, has focused on the allowable limits of sexually explicit scenes, as if censorship affects society only when it prevents art from depicting the coupling men and women" (114). Even today issues of how much of nudity is acceptable and how much gay and lesbian material must be allowed are all matters of concern and active debate. The serious discussion of such matters has also had the effect of tempting writers to focus more often on such themes to the extent that the pressing need to address more urgent issues is often sidelined. Heng and Devan are impatient with this avoidance strategy and they are very clear that such strategies are hardly effective: According to them: "the challenge we have inadvertently posed our writers is: try and see how far you can get with rubber duckies, even when what really concerns you is free speech, detention without trial, or the price of beans" (114).

If what Heng and Devan say is true, it is also equally evident that not all writing in Singapore has adopted this avoidance strategy. While cultural control has led to a kind of streamlining it has also led to form of inventiveness that give a uniqueness to Singapore writing. Salman Rushdie, who constantly invokes the image of the censor in *Shame*, claims that "every story one chooses to tell is a kind of censorship, it prevents the telling of other tales ..." (71). But the story that is told is also about the story that is not told, and Singapore writers have been able to include these shadowy stories in ways that are of considerable interest. Lee Tzu Pheng, Kirpal Singh, and a host of other writers have continued writing, always using strategies that preserve their integrity as writers while avoiding a direct confrontation with the state.

It is hardly new to claim the literature has always been partial to satire and irony. Catherine Lim's writing has been, for the most part, ironic and what she points to are the hopeless incongruities caused by the materialism and the drive to succeed in the country. She is at her best in dealing with the Chinese community, in both her novels and her short stories, and the issues she foregrounds are such that they reveal the inconsistencies in the private sphere in a manner that shows the relation between the private and the public. Particularly in her short stories, one recognizes the stories that have not been told. In the incongruous and the facetious lie the possibility of telling alternative stories.

The plays of Stella Kon, Robert Yeo for instance, or some of the best known poems of Thumboo, work with dualities, with the irony of undying faith in money. Yeo's play *One Year Back Home* (1990) directly invokes politics whereas Kuo Pao Kun's *The Coffin Is Too Big for the Hole* (1990) mocks the rationalism of state ideology while ostensibly working within and satirising traditional Chinese values. This is subversion, but it is a kind of subversion that seems more acceptable to the authorities or at least one that gets past their watchful eyes. And one would imagine that it is because the country is mindful of how precarious the balance is between economic success and cultural preservation and is aware that the private sphere could well be comrpomised in the drive for success. In that sense, binarism and irony have in fact fed into state ideolog, nourished it and subverted it as well.

A direct exploration of politics, then, is hardly possible in the country. One of the few books that have appeared in the recent past is a work called Kampung Chicken (1990) which is intertextually a rewriting of Animal Farm. Entirely in the form of a fable, the book is about freedom, about the need to break free of confines and it remains an important work, although it is a fable and the thrust of it is entirely allegorical.

Among the recent writers, perhaps the two that are significant are Philip Jeyaretnam, whose recent work Abraham's Promise (1995) is an important one and Baratham who is probably among hte most exciting writers in Singapore today. Intertextually connected with the well-known novel Plumb by Maurice Gee, Abraham's Promise creates a frame that enables looking at social and political issues. It is difficult not to see the connecton between, for instance, Abraham's Promise and the promise of a new land. The structure of the novel allows for interospection, for historical assessment and for moral judgment, from the perspective of an individual. In the framework of realism, the problems relate entirely to the individual, but it is clear, certainly when one takes into account the intertextuality, the Jeyaretnam is bringing to the surface issues that are particular to Singapore. Jeyaretnam's work, very much like other contemporary writing, points to ways in which one needs to think of Siggapore writing in relation to political constraints. Writers, for the msot part, have carefuly avoided engaging in discussions about politics for censorhsip. But they have also been actively

engaged in finding strategies that are empowering, ones that allows for the articulation of resistance but still do not flaunt subversion.

In the proliferation and popularity of gothic writing in Sigapore, there is again the opportunity to explore that notion of fear, in contexts that have no immediate bearing on the social and cultural conditions, but ehre again one sees the writers responding to restrictions by dealing not with causes but with effects. Here again, the issue is not merely comouflage; gothic excess is a way of recognizing and recording the ambivalence of the writer who is not entirely in oppositon but not one who is entirely in agreement either.

Literary criticism about Singaporean writing has been, for the most part, reluctant to discuss the issue of censorshp. its main focus has been identity, the manner in which the various writers explore their pasts and their status in Sigapoe. It is, probably, equally imprtant to look at the kinds of tales that authors have chosen to tell in a country where official control is decisive but official policy has led to sability and prosperity. In the best of literature produced in the country, the response to censorship has been non-confrontational but clearly meaningful and in its own way, oppositional.

In the whole corpus of contemporary writing, Gopal Baratham is decidedly different, and that he has published his works in Singapore as well is heartening Baratham has been writing consistently for several years and his most recent works have been published in England, a decision which in itselof was seen in some quarters as beig significant. Whatever the reasons, his works express a willingness to explore what has remained prohibited.

As a novel that is concerned with a writer who is coopted by the State and punished for not conforming to certain guidelines, the structure of *A Candle or the Sun* allows for very straightforward caricature of state censorship. At one level the novel could be seen as didactic narrative whose main purpose is to condemn the repressive practices of the government. For a novel about which there is much to write about, it is surprising that very little has in fact been written. Heng and Devan do critique the text but they are very critical of the author's tendency to deemphasize politics and focus on sexuality. As they put it, "the attention of a cultural text that would present itself as social and political critique is split and undermined by its own obsession with sexual display. The most striking, powerful images that imprint

themselves on our attention come, not from political critique, but from the salacious conjunction of sexual and racial stereotypes ..." (112). The criticism is hardly valid, in this novel as in others, for Baratham is directly concerned with political resistance as a national concern and the text itself foregrounds the complex relation between ethnicity, religion, language and politics. Working with issues that are clearly sensitive, Baratham produces work that has neither the indirection of, say, Jeyaretnam nor the allegorical distancing of Velloo. That Baratham's text enjoys wide readership in Singapore and is taught in universities is reassuring, leading one to think that while censorship is still a significant presence in the country it is probably no longer a serious impediment to imaginative writing.

Notes and References

[1] The title is, in part, an expression of my immense admiration and respect for Professor W.H. New: a brilliant scholar, a dedicated teacher, and above all, a man of principle.

[2] The comment applies to all the writers except Lee Kok Liang who died in 1992.

[3] I owe this comment to Professor Kirpal Singh whose general observations on the paper were extremely insightful.

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Writing from the Fringe of a Multi-Cultural Society

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'Exile is marvellous homage to our origins.'
Carlos Fuentes
Terra Nostra, Penguin Books, 1977

If you're a writer in English in Malaysia, it isn't unusual to run into the following encounters or non-encounters:

'Where you work, ah?' the man behind the well-appointed, modish desk in a computer shop, says.

'Writer,' you say.

'Reporter for newspaper?'

'No, I write fiction.'

'Fishion?' he says, and suddenly becomes interested in arranging brochures and stationary on his desk.

Or your latest novel has been favourably reviewed in the leading English daily and you, also a lecturer in an English Department, walk into its corridors feeling, to say the least, mildly exhilarated, only to find your usually urbane colleagues suddenly greeting you with a dark and monumental silence.

Or you're invited as a panel member to a forum to present a paper on the topic, 'Towards a Definition of Malaysian Literature', the proceedings to be specifically conducted in English. The main speaker, a one-time highly respected figure in literary circles, speaks in Malay for an hour and concludes that only national literature can be Malaysian literature and that it has to be written in Malay. Malay, it must be noted, was until recently called Bahasa Malaysia or the National language, with the attendant hope

that it would be become a mother tongue to all; that it would not only nurture but also be nurtured by the linguistic resources available among the various communities in the country.

The above three incidents do in their ways exemplify what can be called the fringe situation. The first illustrates how writing, especially in English, is located as a newspaper activity; its larger roles either unknown to the computer-store man, the representative of the average Malaysian who is preoccupied with padding out a comfortable living, or are for him not worth taking the trouble to know.

The second is representative of a literary setting that may ratify the existence of a writer's work but doesn't, either from a lingering postcolonial attachment to the British canon or respect for national literary definitions, which perceive writing in English as sectional literature. And the third, of course, contains an attitude which doesn't want to see the existence of any writing in English. What is common to all these three incidents is that each of them contains what I would call, for want of a better expression, a turned-away attitude.

I would like to examine in this paper the causes of this attitude and its influences on a writer wishing to continue writing in his chosen language, in this case, the English language. This would necessitate an inquiry into the socio-political, cultural and literary situations in order to understand why Malaysian writers in the various languages haven't joined ranks if not through the quality of their output, then at least through the spirit of open inquiry and commitment writing should engender among them, the world brotherhood.

I hyphenate the word 'Multi-Cultural' in the title because it reflects, in a miniscule way, the nature and practice of multiculturalism in Malaysia, which, in turn, are responsible for the kinds of realities accessible to or constructed by the various races in the country.

The writer in general and the writer in English, in particular, in a postcolonial situation, is concerned with how he fits or doesn't fit into the only society he has known or can ever know. He is troubled by the persistent experiences of ostracism he is confronted by in Malaysia, which relegate his works to an almost non-existent literary fringe. The third

incident, cited above, that of the forum intended to define a Malaysian literature, certainly indicates it is impossible for him to conceptualize a continuous literary spectrum in which his works occupy even a fringe position. The dramatization of a deeply entrenched ethnocentric, nationalistic attitude in that incident implies that he has to float about in a kind of fringelessness. This isn't only the experience of the writer but also that of the questioning, disenchanted Malaysian as the following quote illustrates:

> 'I have lived in this country all my life and I have come to accept minority status,' says Mahabratha, in a letter to the **Sunday Star**, 3 September 1995, and later comments, 'There is so much talk about national integration and racial unity but apart from the near Hollywood scale of productions of *Visit Malaysia Year* and the National Day celebrations, whose sole purpose, in my opinion, is to attract tourist dollars, one sees hardly any effort towards creating a *Bangsa Malaysia* (Malaysian race).'

This writer's dissatisfaction with the socio-cultural and political situations in the country is presented by referring to the ruling class' statements of intention and a not-so-subtle diversion from that highly publicized ambition. His use of Mahabratha as a nom de plume not only signals his ethnicity but also his expectations of a full and deeply ramified inter-cultural landscape. However, what are delivered are images of display and consumerism, images that will be put away once the shows are over. The implication is here is that there is no continuous and urgent engagement with the real issues of evolving a *Bangsa Malaysia* or Malaysian race.

It is relevant at this point to take note of what Homi K. Bhabha says in relation to this complex process of evolving a common nation in his **Liminal Negotiation of Cultural Difference:**

> It is in the emergence of the interstices – the overlap and displacement of domains of difference – that the intersubjective and collective experiences of nationness, community interest, or cultural value are negotiated.(2)'

It appears that in multi-cultural Malaysia, there has been no 'emergence of the interstices' between the various communities for there

to be 'collective experiences of nationness, community interest, or cultural value'. In other words, the inner and outer realities a Malaysian perceives do not come anywhere near a commonly accepted and comfortable reality, tempered by individual variations. Malaysians however do possess common goals such as economic security and materialistic success, and the desire for relatively high educational achievements, but there isn't a reality commonly accessible to the Malaysian Malay, Chinese and Indian. The various strategies that the ruling regime planned and executed to evolve a Malaysian identity once again originated from distracted versions of the realities of history.

The realities of history, I believe, can be and often are intercepted and interpreted in such a way as to accommodate the many fears, anxieties, and ambitions of cultures and societies. The cultural and social landscapes that emerge tend to display the desired image of man while glossing over his confrontational and complex position in a multi-cultural society. Can the more leisurely, meaning here, the time needed for the vital expression of an attitude or process, development of culture/cultures be interfered with? What kind of historical and literary perceptions in the communities of a particular country does such a self or community-dreamed conception of culture produce? How do the individual communities view each other in a multi-cultural situation?

One answer could be that the immediate post-Independence ambitions for an integrated Malaysian society got side-tracked or modified so that what was finally sought through these strategies and agendas was only sense of togetherness. The recognition behind all these moves, it could be interpreted, was that it was impossible to produce a common Malaysian identity because of the diversity of cultural attitudes and practices. Only a sense of togetherness could be generated among the multi-cultural population. What is this sense of togetherness? It is the feeling that the people of the country are living and working for common objectives; that they are seen to be living side by side, working side by side, achieving goals side by side; but that that side by side divide need not be eroded or removed. It becomes an acknowledged frontier, a necessary barrier. Once this divide is broken down, then the concept of purity goes.

This concept of purity can be defined as the isolation of the races – the several cultural solitudes – so that their cultural and religious territories will remain sacrosanct and unpenetrated. The various communities may come in contact with one another in the course of their daily lives but they must not leave any particular of their cultural sense or heritage behind them. This desire to retain the cultural purity of the various communities may have originated from the post-WW2 and pre-independence syndrome: the need to rediscover one's own cultural identity. The Japanese occupation of the country between 1942-1945 caused, among other consequences, what can be called a cultural disrobing and displacement among the various races. The enforced obeisance to the Japanese flag, Japanese visions and values (distorted under war conditions) would have obliterated, for a time, any sense of their cultural selves.

The return to their cultural shores after the war, however, produced an intense awareness in the major community of the fragile position it had been occupying in Malaysian society and history. The negotiations that were conducted in the post-WW2 and pre-Independence period were, I think, largely based on this sense of the vulnerable and the secure. In a recent meeting of the major component of the ruling party, this sentiment was expressed: if the party 'failed to carry out such reforms, Malays and bumiputras would be humiliated and have to submit to others again' (**The Star**, 11 October 1996). While one community moved in the direction of designing an unassailable cultural space, the other communities, in reaction to this fierce determination, which would produce a racially divided and volatile situation, settled for security. While this community drove relentlessly towards re-establishing its indigenous status, the other communities opted for economic security and a certain laizzez faire in religious and cultural matters. With the achievement of independence, these positions of the various races were ratified by the country's new constitution.

The post-Independence and, therefore, the postcolonial period saw a deeper entrenchment of this communal approach to life in Malaysia. From the minority point of view, it was felt that new adjustments had to be made to the concept of cultural and social structuring and organization. While it has to be recognized that in the postcolonial period, it was characteristic

that newly independent countries establish their presence through an emphasized nationalistic sense, one wonders at the continued need to be nationalistic forty years after independence. The much despised divide-and-rule policy of imperialistic ambition has, in fact, only reappeared under the guise of nationalism. Just as in colonial times the people were made to serve the colonialist's ambitions and dreams, so now, in the postcolonial period, the minorities are persuaded to serve the dominant community's visions of itself and its future.

This is recognized even by writers coming from the dominant community. Here is Usman Awang, one of the national laureates, lamenting the fact in *Sahabatku (My Friend, dedicated to Dr.M.K.Rajakumar), 1979/1983* [qtd in the **Sunday Star**, 8 October 1996]:

> ...Dear Friend
> The one, free
> nation we imagined,
> Remains a distant truth,
> My anger becomes bitterness,
> When we are forced apart,
> The distance ever wider,
> Now that I am proclaimed "bumiputra"
> and you are not.

It would appear then that there is a utopian Malaysia and a real Malaysia; utopian Malaysia is the ideal that is the subject of political talk and media presentations while the real Malaysia is the country where the individual has to struggle for some kind of self-realization.

> ~~How are subjects~~ (to quote once again from Homi Bhabha) formed 'in-between', or in excess of, the sum of the 'parts' of difference (usually intoned as race/class/gender, etc.)? How do strategies of representation or empowerment come to be formulated in the competing claims of communities where, despite shared histories or deprivation and discrimination, the exchange of values, meanings and priorities may not always be collaborative and dialogical, but may be profoundly antagonistic, conflictual and even incommensurable? (2)[2]

In the Malaysian context, these questions are not even addressed, let alone answered. Even the disturbing and catastrophic 1969 May 13 racial riots in the country did not produce a deeply concerned and diagnostic attitude towards a society bursting at its seams – if there were seams at all in the first place – and only instilled fear in the various communities. Once again they returned to their turned-away attitude, I mentioned at the beginning of this paper, and refined it into a pragmatic philosophy of tolerance for living in a multi-cultural society.

At its most constructive level, this philosophy of pragmatic tolerance has generated a guarded mutual respect between the various races and love for peace and stability among them. The Malaysian, whether he is Malay, Chinese or Indian, has benefitted from this sense of respect; it has nurtured the stability needed for a sustained economic growth and, subsequently, the opportunity to be economically secure. But this has also meant that each community remain within its cultural territory and not transgress into the cultural domains of the other communities.

Embedded in this philosophy of pragmatic tolerance is the belief, however false, that the three communities have experienced history, particularly its colonial aspects, in different ways and that this would fashion different attitudes among them. The Chinese and Indian communities, being migrant communities, so it is glibly assumed, would view life from a materialistic sense of ambition while the indigenous community would view life as being more closely bound to and being always engaged in developing a cultural intimacy with the land.

Though writing in English may be relegated to less than a fringe position and its 'ideas, values, and imaginative worlds...erased from the official national canon'[3], nevertheless it is the writing that can explore or call the cultural loyalist's attention to the 'subjects formed 'in-between', or in excess of, the sum of the 'parts' of difference [and] the competing claims of communities....'[4] As Salman Rushdie explains: 'those peoples who were once colonized by the language are now rapidly remaking it, domesticating it, becoming more and more relaxed about the way they use it – assisted by the English language's enormous flexibility and size, they are carving out large territories for themselves within its frontiers'.[5]

My own experience with writing in English over the last thirty years or so informs me that I have moved away from the imperialistically-tainted language I was taught in school in the 1950s. Besides that, my engagement with writing in Malay in the 1980s tells me that I will be paddling in shallow pools and encroaching on the sensitivities of linguistic purists all the time. I was accused of Tamilizing the Malay language because I translated my play, **The Cord**, originally written in English, into Malay! These purists advocate 'a closed Malay-language/Malay-cultural base...which is conceptualize[d] as "tradition," "roots," and "the strength of the race."'[6]

Such a linguistic attitude has led its followers to make absurd and horrifying claims, as the following quote exemplifies:

> (The previous letter writer) also says that "anyone who hopes to evaluate Malay literature has to have the perception and imagination of the Malays ...[;] one has to talk, think, dream and even procreate in that language." I can safely assume that (the previous writer) is not an Englishman and I dare him to claim that he has the perception and imagination of Englishmen. From his letter, I doubt that he thinks or dreams, let alone procreate, in English. Yet he presumes to show that Shakespeare writes badly.[7]

My own response to such circumscribed marking out of cultural and literary boundaries has been to go along with Salman Rushdie to claim 'large territories [and] frontiers' in my writing. The following excerpt from my short story, *Haunting the Tiger*, illuminates:

"I know what's wrong,' Zulkifli says. "There's something foreign to the tiger's nose. He won't show himself until the smells are gone."

"What smells?" he says.

"Mind and body smells,' Zulkifli says.

Muthu is offended and turns away from him.

"Not in the way you can't go near a person," Zulkifli says, confronting Muthu. "The clothes you wear, the thoughts you think. Where do they come from?"

"They're just clothes and ideas," Muthu says.

"They must fit into the place where the tiger lives."

"Why must they fit in?" Muthu says. "I only want to break out from my father's hold on me."

"So you brought a purpose with you?" Zulkifli says. "And a way of thinking. How can you get into the tiger's stripes and spirit?"

"I can make the leap," Muthu says, thinking of the chameleon.[8]

I've made this journey that Zulkifli, the Malay, and Muthu, the descendent of a migrant, make into the interior of the land deeply symbolic in the hope of reflecting the hidden fears and ambitions of the bumiputra and the non-bumiputra. If you analyse the behaviour and thoughts of these two characters, you discover that the bumiputra, acting from within a centre of self-assurance, speaks through the rhetoric of empowerment. When this rhetoric of empowerment is also given the characteristics of a ritual needed to enter into the spirit of the land, then it becomes overwhelmingly powerful. But the response that Muthu makes to this seductive, comforting and almost spiritual exercise is surprising because he seems not to want to be reassured. He subconsciously compares Zulkifli with his father who represents, in an earlier section of the story, all that is in cultural decline. It is remembering his father's authoritative injunctions, as he listens to Zulkifli's reassuring and confident voice that he thinks of the chameleon.

The chameleon, as opposed to the tiger, is a small and almost insignificant creature; Muthu has had an epiphanic experience of identifying with it in one of his earlier self-discovery rambles in the jungles of dream landscape:

His tail unclasps and as he hurtles through the changing hues of the foliage and sees the red, dark earth rush up to him, he screams, 'I'll possess! I'll possess!'

He wakes up trying to wipe out the words but the dream continues into his wakefulness. He sees himself as the chameleon, now landed on the ground matted with leaves, and the blood pulsing through veins carried beyond the centuries.[9]

The tiger is a fully realized symbol of nationhood and sense of belonging; but it can also lend itself as an intimidating rhetorical device to those who unquestioningly surrender to its powers. It reflects a rhetoric full of closures whereas Muthu, embracing the spirit of the chameleon, wants an approach that covers a wider spectrum of man's memories, struggles and achievements that transcend self-dreamed and nationally-envisioned boundaries.

The novel *In A Far Country*, where another version of this tiger-chameleon episode is located, as one critic comments, 'take[s] us with vigour and imagination into the difficult subject of a man's attempt to traverse repeatedly psychic, ethnic, temporal and spatial boundaries. Breaking out of the insularity created by shaping influences on the self, Rajan, [the protagonist and an epigone of Muthu], promises to "go back again and again" to make fresh discoveries and to apprehend a humane continuity which embraces all men regardless of race or class.'[10]

My experience of writing in English in multi-cultural Malaysia suggests that the writer has to cease worrying about whether he is located on the fringe or in the centre of an artificially created literary paradigm; he has to accept being an exile in a land that continually denies him a sense of belonging. This sense of homelessness in a land you have always treated as your home gives you, in unexpected ways, the courage of the chameleon, rather than the reassuring and circumscribing strength of the tiger, to continually and creatively discover the marvellous and even metaphysical nature of your origins.

Notes and References

1 Homi K. Bhabha: the Liminal Negotiation of Cultural Difference, file:///E|/BHABHA~2.HTML.

2 Ibid.

3 Shirley Geok-Lin Lim, 'Crossroads and Crossed Words', in Hena Maeselinek et al ed. **A Talent(ed) Digger**, Amsterdam/Atlanta: Rodopi B.V.,1996, p.347.

4 Homi K. Bhabha: the Liminal Negotiation of Cultural Difference, file:///E|BHABHA~2.HTML.

5 Span number 34-5 'Diasporas' Maria Degabriele, http://kali.murdoch.edu.au/cntinuum/litserv/SPAN/34/Degabriele.html.

6 Shirley Geok-Lin Lim, ibid, p.345.

7 **New Straits Times**, Literary section, 10 January 1996, p.9.

8 **Haunting the Tiger: Contemporary Stories from Malaysia**. London: Skoob Books Publishing, 1996, p.45.

9 Ibid., p.42.

10 Wong Soak Koon, 'Journeying into K.S.Maniam's *In A Far Country*' in Lim Chee Seng ed. **Challenges of Reading the New and the Old**, Kuala Lumpur: Department of English in association with MACLALS, 1995, pp.106-7.

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"A City Visible But Unseen": The (Un)Realities of London in South Asian Fiction

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London occupies a privileged place in the post-colonial imaginary. As the "heart of empire," London was the seat of imperial power, trade, and cultural influence reaching its long arms out to Britain's colonies. In the post-war decolonizing era it has become a destination, a site where formerly colonized peoples could enact what is sometimes called "imperialism in reverse": they have occupied and even reterritorialized a city that metonymically (as the "metropolitan centre") had done the same in colonial space. In the literature of the Indian diaspora, London features prominently: as a real place to live or visit; as a symbolic site of struggle and conquest; as an object of desire and the idealizing imagination.

H.G. Wells, writing in imperial times, said that London represented "how much must be moved if there was to be any [social] change"; his London is an "obstacle," a place of solid materialities that need to be budged (Williams 5). Wells's view resonates with the experiences of characters in many post-colonial texts. For Africans, West Indians, and South Asians in London, the city presents numerous obstacles: racism, segregation, and solitude; an alien climate and built environment; the colour bar, poverty, and cultural conflicts. Since the 1950s, novels by such writers as Buchi Emecheta, Caryl Phillips, Sam Selvon, Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, and Salman Rushdie have documented the concrete difficulties and struggles faced by London's "New Commonwealth" immigrants. But if the metropolis regularly confronts the post-colonial subject with seemingly immovable realities, in many South Asian novels it also exemplifies *unreality*, insubstantiality, and transformation. In the play between these seemingly polarized constructions — often coexisting in the same text — lie deep ambivalences towards London.

In what follows, I will explore the implications of London as real and unreal space in several novels from across the Indian diaspora, with special emphasis on Desai's *Bye-Bye Blackbird* (1971) and Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* (1988).

It might be tempting to see the dissolving of hard realities into immaterial unrealities as a very Indian kind of post-colonial resistance — the metropolis as *maya*, if you will. But the duality is handled with too much variety and complexity to see in it any consistent political implications. Moreover, the perceptual paradox examined here is not exclusively Indian; many urban theorists describe the city as a mix of the material and the ethereal, the stable and the unstable. Ihab Hassan calls the city "intractable" but also "Immaterial," a "gritty structure" that is nevertheless "invisible, imaginary, made of dream and desire, agent of all our transformations" (94). For Jonathan Raban, cities are "plastic by nature," the product of human consciousness: "The city as we imagine it, the soft city of illusion, myth, aspiration, nightmare, is as real, maybe more real, than the hard city one can locate on maps [and] in statistics" (10). Rushdie's view of the city is similar. As he says in an interview:

> I think the things that cities have in common are precisely their fantastic nature — that cities are, after all, invented spaces, artificial spaces. They're spaces which look very permanent, solid, but which in fact are extremely ephemeral and transitory, and huge buildings can fall overnight. The shape of a city constantly changes, but at any given moment it looks absolutely solid and permanent, so it's a kind of fiction. (Ball, "Interview" 32-33)

London's most permanent and unchanging spaces are its historic monuments. Burton Pike writes that a city's "stubborn spatiality" is "epitomized by its monuments" (132); the urban geographer Jane M. Jacobs shows how in contemporary London — a place where global and local, past and present cohabit — efforts to preserve the historic built environment in the name of "heritage," as well as some redevelopment schemes, show a nostalgic desire to memorialize, preserve, and even commodify the grandeur and might of Empire (40). When post-colonial migrants inhabit London's historic spaces they may, like the narrator of Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* (1956), experience pleasure and even euphoria in being able to walk on Waterloo

Bridge or Charing Cross Road: "to say these things, . . . to have lived in the great city of London, centre of the world" (121). But others respond by debunking London's monuments, cutting them and the imperial city they symbolize down to size — noting, for instance, that Big Ben is "not so big" (Atwood 145), that Piccadilly Circus is not really a circus (Frame 183-84), and that the celebrated city of imperial light is rather grey and drab. For some, the response to famous landmarks is more mixed: Dev in *Bye-Bye Blackbird* finds St. Paul's Cathedral and Westminster Abbey "awesome" and "overpowering" (67), but he also feels "uneasy" that they seem not so much expressions of religious power and passion as "temples dedicated to the British Empire" (68).

The geographer Doreen Massey has persuasively argued for a conception of space as a socially constructed, simultaneous expression of time. Any spatial entity, she says — a neighbourhood, a building, a field, a road — is saturated or infused with temporality (154-59). For "New Commonwealth" migrants in London, those material spaces where the city most obviously expresses historical time are overdetermined by associations with Empire, and so the experience of such spaces is often ambivalent. On one hand they are concrete symbols of the ways the imperial past continues in the present — a continuance migrants can feel in the quotidian obstacles to living, working, and feeling at home in London. On the other hand, just to occupy such famous spots, often "known" and mythologized in the imagination beforehand, carries the promise of reterritorializing, taking over, renewing the politics of global space at the local level.

The fact that London is "known" in the imaginary of once-colonized peoples who have not been there has important implications for its treatment in post-colonial novels. Of course, the colonial education system — the Empire's PR machine — ensured that it *was* known: as political, economic, and cultural "centre"; as literary setting; as distant object of desire where famous landmarks beckoned and where leaders, foreign and indigenous, were "naturally" produced. But because it begins as an idea, a set of ideologically loaded representations, a place no one goes to without some mental image, London is *a priori* an "unreal" place for the post-colonial migrant, and various kinds of unreality persist in representations of it.

For the Lalani family in M.G. Vassanji's *No New Land* (1991), it remains unreal for a very concrete reason. Moving from Tanzania to Toronto,

they feel they should see London "at least this one time in their lives." For them,

> London was not a foreign place, not really, it was a city they all knew in their hearts. To hear Big Ben chime for real, see the Houses of Parliament and London Bridge, Buckingham Palace, perhaps the Queen and Prince Philip, and Westminster Abbey where David Livingstone lies buried. London — the pussycat and Dick Wittington, nursery rhymes clamoured in their brains. (33)

This cluster of images and associations is destined to stay in their brains, however; the Lalanis' London never materializes because they are barred entry at the airport. But even for those who do experience London "for real," unreality persists. In Markandaya's *The Nowhere Man* (1972), the Indian immigrant Srinivas and his British housemate experience "a curious state of unreality" after he suffers a racial attack (224). The realization of insecurity in Britain (the new home-country) is materialized in the image of a house that suddenly seems flimsy and insubstantial:

> His mind . . . considered illusions, of men and the castles they built, himself in particular, and the houses on two continents in which he had lodged, which each when the time was ripe had repudiated the contracts of security to which it had not in the first place been signatory. . . . He sighed, and looked about him at the attic, which had once presented aspects of solidity. Its walls were fragile now, reduced by the general paring away that was taking place. Was it really here, he asked himself, that he had sought and found refuge? He pondered, and was lost in wonder that these rafters and laths, which were so patently made of paper, could ever have seemed to promise him more than the flimsiest physical shelter. (225)

The feeling of unreality may be caused by the barriers and racism that keep idealized dreams of London in their unreachable place, but it may also reflect a more general sense that the metropolis represents alien space. The first sentence of *The Lonely Londoners*, a novel steeped in gritty detail about material hardships, reads in part: "One grim winter evening, . . . it have a kind of unrealness about London, . . . as if is not London at all but some strange place on another planet" (7).

The city as dreamscape: in V.S. Naipaul's *The Mimic Men* (1967), Ralph Singh flees Caribbean "disorder" for a "dream" of "order" in London, but finds only "emptiness" and disappointment. "The god of the city was elusive," he says (18, 8). In expressing his disillusion, Singh plays repeatedly with images of substantiality and insubstantiality: "We seek the physical city and find only a conglomeration of private cells," he says: "In the city . . . we are reminded that we are individuals, units." After this image of citizens as atomized materiality, the city's "physical aspect" is said to be a "marvel of light": "a light which gave solidity to everything." Singh continues, "In the great city, so solid in its light, which gave colour even to unrendered concrete . . . — in this solid city life was two-dimensional" (18-19). This image of flattened-out unreality is developed further in a later passage which calls London "the too solid three-dimensional city in which I could never feel myself as anything but spectral, disintegrating, pointless, fluid" (52). Here, then, the city is substantial (though made so by its light), and it is the migrant citizen who flattens out into invisibility. In another sense, the city is itself reduced by Naipaul's book; like everything else in the book it is processed through Singh's highly controlling consciousness, and we are reminded that the city — a material text to be read — is also, in fiction, a text written. As such, it has no material existence beyond the minds that construct it and the words that represent it.

Amitav Ghosh foregrounds this idea directly in *The Shadow Lines* (1988). For the narrator as a boy in Calcutta, London is a distant place he imagines into existence by listening to stories and memorizing maps; he authoritatively claims to "know" it before ever experiencing it. When he does visit London as an adult, his knowledge proves both real and illusory. Navigating expertly through a district fully mapped in his imagination, he has trouble separating past from present. The image of the bombed-out street he knows from Tridib's stories of the war supersedes the visible present reality, and he discovers that "I . . . could not believe in the truth of what I did see" (56). In a novel obsessed with simultaneity and overlappings — of different times and distant places, of realities remembered, imagined, and experienced, of borders crossed — Ghosh recognizes in this scene that what is "real" transcends what is materially, physically present. If we accept, with Massey, that space is infused with time, with Jacobs that the global inheres in the metropolitan local, and with Rushdie that the city's solidity is an

illusion, then we can identify the city as a palimpsest, its present spaces layered with local and global pasts. For Ghosh, it is important not only to see "that a place does not merely exist, that it has to be invented in one's imagination" (21), but also to bring to a site like London something of the archaeologist's imaginative attentiveness: to see in its present materiality the spectre of previous realities, alternative possibilities, worldly connections.

Dev in *Bye-Bye Blackbird*, in his obstreperous way, shows something of this attentiveness. He arrives in London full of images derived from a colonial-style education in English literature, able to recognize scenes and name local objects based on this imaginative preparedness: "He had known them all . . . before, in the pages of Dickens and Lamb, Addison and Boswell, Dryden and Jerome K. Jerome; not in colour and in three dimensions as he now encountered them, but in black and white and made of paper" (10). He remarks at "how exact the reproductions had been, how accurate" so that although he had never experienced "this world" before, it was still "known, familiar, easy to touch, enjoy and accept because he was so well prepared to enter it" (10, 11). He feels empowered by the materialization of what he knew as a "paper replica" because that image seemed "larger than life," whereas "what he now saw and touched and breathed was recognisably the original, but an original cut down to size, under control, concrete, so that it no longer flew out of his mind and hovered above him like some incorporeal, winged creature" (11). This passage is intriguing in many ways. In appropriating and subsuming London to his own experience and perspective, Dev the post-colonial migrant begins to take possession of it. But he does so by establishing a line of temporal continuity between past and present (and between a textual image and an actual site) in a contained space — the scene takes place in a pub — where the differences between Britain's post-colonial present and its imperial past are papered over by a nostalgic traditionalism. The pub is an artifice, a replica of a former reality; the time with which it is infused denies time (in the sense of change). If Dev can paradoxically figure the actual city as smaller than literary representations of it, and therefore as under his control, this is because he is making a false synecdoche between "city" and a rather unreal, packaged space within it — the pub.

Another way in which Dev is prepared for London is through his experience of colonial architecture in India. Buildings and planning in

colonial cities often "mimicked" the design of European cities (Jacobs 20); this was one way imperial powers reterritorialized alien space. Walking through London, Dev finds that the Albert Memorial in Hyde Park — which looks "like a piece of architecture having a nightmare following an ample Victorian repast" — seems familiar. Its shapes "recalls to him similar nightmares of stone and marble in India" such as Bombay's Victoria Station, Calcutta's Victoria Memorial, and the statue of Victoria outside Delhi's railway station (83). For Dev, these are anachronistic examples of those "pockets and stretches of Victorian India which continue to have a life of their own, a dream life out of touch with the present" (84). Yet he finds the Albert Memorial oddly compelling:

> Dev is not sure whether he comes to it, again and again, in order to look upon the face of England as it had existed in his imagination when he was a child . . . or because it reminds him of that Victorian India that formed a part — unreal and, therefore, all the more haunting, omnipresent and subliminal — of the India he had known. (84)

Here certain material elements of London and the big cities of India make them seem like simulacra of each other — unreal and mutually reflective. In another scene, Dev contrasts the "tight, insular clusters" of Indian cities with the "space and depth" he experiences in London's "vistas," which give him the empowering "sensation of an explorer on the verge of discovery" (69-70).

Although he does experience the reality check of racial slurs and difficulties getting a job, Dev is prone to see London in idealized, even deluded ways. To this extent he resembles his friend Adit, with whom he is ostensibly contrasted. Indeed, Dev is most enthused about London when it seems least touched by time. Standing on a high hill from which he can see the city in a glance, he reverentially "observes that the English have a genius for preserving beauty . . . from the ravages of time and decay, so that it affects generation after generation in precisely the same manner" (82-83). The scene he describes, featuring churches, flowers, tufted grass, the ghost of Byron, and "the sunlit city of London lying far below them" (83), is a romantic escape from alienating street-level reality. The hilltop setting enables this; as Michel de Certeau observes, to look down at a city from above "transforms the bewitching world by which one was 'possessed'

into a text that lies before one's eyes. It allows one to read it, . . . looking down like a god" (92). Richard Sennett also notes the ways a choice of perspective allows the viewer to make a city "cohere," often with "an undertone of possessive domination" (155-56). Reading the city from on high, then, is for Dev an empowering discovery or repossession of something now containable and legible. But it is also a fantasy: this power and readability do not exist at street level — where the slammed door is a defining image (Desai 120) — and certainly not below ground, which is described in a scene at Clapham tube station as an "unearthly," labyrinthine prison that makes a panicky Dev think of Kafka, Alice in Wonderland, martians, and tombs (57). If such images of underground unreality draw on literary conventions, what Dev "sees" from above, which feels so liberating, is also what he has been trained and predisposed to see. He finds security in a textual city untouched by time, known because read, but ultimately unreal.

Both Dev and the *Shadow Lines* narrator discover in London a version of what they already "know" as mental images derived from texts. The effect in Ghosh's novel is of London imbued with a dense time-space — full of its own past and of connections to elsewhere — that offers a compelling model of what a truly *post*-colonial revisioning of London and of global space might look like. Desai's Dev, by contrast, wavers ambivalently between an empowering nostalgic unreality and an alienating present-tense reality. On occasion his mappings do re-orient metropolitan spaces in ways that support a post-colonial reclamation. When Dev sees the Battersea power station as a monumental shrine to British power, its inside takes on a quite Hindu imaginative reality for him. Dev envisions the station as a "temple" with a "sacrificial bonfire" presided over by saffron-robed priests conducting a *puja*; it is they who he pictures generating "the electricity of London" (54). Here, as in his ebullient fancy of Indian realities invading London in order to "turn the tables" (61) on imperial history (a precursor of Gibreel's tropicalization fantasy in *The Satanic Verses*), and as in the Victorian architectural links he sees, Dev acknowledges that the imperial might represented by London's spatial monumentality is inseparable from the energy and resources of the colonies that propped it up. London, as Roy Porter argues, was built by Empire (1-2). Dev symbolically acknowledges this by seeing some of its most stubbornly concrete sites as infused or overlaid with India.

This may be a more promising coming-to-terms with England for Dev than the climactic countryside epiphany, a later experience that finally prompts him to see England not as an imperial aggressor to be fought but rather as "something quite small and soft" that he can "hold and tame and even love" (229). In a moment of what Tony Hiss would call "simultaneous perception" (3-4), Dev recognizes a pastoral idyll which confirms that his dreams of England back home (again, derived from nineteenth-century literature) were an "exact" and "mirrorlike reflection of reality" (170). The ecstasy caused by this discovery enables him to feel connected with England. The location of this epiphany is significant: as David Sibley shows, the countryside is traditionally stereotyped as the essence of timeless pure "Englishness" in contrast to the fluid cosmopolitan space of the city, and thus the countryside is an exclusive space that "cannot accommodate difference" (108). But overcoming this excluding myth with Romantic-Victorian nostalgia, as Dev does, does not affiliate his appropriation of English space, rural or urban, with a progressive post-colonial politics. The psychological comfort and peace it provides is based on a kind of willed self-deception, and will have limited application back in the city.

It is interesting that Adit, the former anglophile, does find the countryside excluding: it alienates him suddenly from England and London. For him, the English landscape becomes displaced by contrasting images of India's "moonscape," and this irrevocably corrupts his former image of London as a "Mecca" (177, 181). Like his English wife Sarah — who privately already feels herself to be an "fraud," an "impostor . . . playing a part" on stage (34-35) — Adit starts calling his metropolitan life "unreal," and London a place of inauthenticity and theatrical falseness. However, his response — to return to India and "start living a real life" (204) — is no less embroiled in imaginary geographies than Dev's fantasies. Leaving London so melodramatically, Adit and Sarah seem to be trading one unreal object of desire for another.

This view of London as theatrical — in the sense of inauthentic or imitative — links *Bye-Bye Blackbird* to other novels. In Markandaya's *Possession* (1963), there is something theatrical about Vaimiki's life with Caroline in London; in this colonial allegory he is the jewel in her crown, the object of display who, with his monkey and his faux-Indian costumes, learns to exploit "the Oriental extravagance that had come to be expected of

him" (120). But for this artist whisked from the gritty materiality of his Indian village to the glossy surfaces of high-society London, it is one thing to create images but another thing to be one. Life as a spectacle proves dispiritingly unreal; Caroline makes it especially so when she props up his muse with fake letters from Swami. Once he discovers her self-serving deception, he leaves London for what to him is the higher reality of Swami's cave in India.

Novels by Vassanji, Hanif Kureishi and others also construct London as a performative space trading in false and theatrical images of the oriental. In Vassanji's *The Book of Secrets* (1994), Ali is seen (wrongly) by London society as a "prince," touted in tabloids as "a son of an oriental chieftain"; his marriage breaks up when Rita can't "act the princess" (290-91). But London as theatrical space is not only seen negatively. Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia* (1990) uses performative role-playing as a controlling metaphor for the transformations that migrants — whether from South Asia or the South London suburbs — undergo in the metropolis, and for the identities, authentic and inauthentic, that they assume.[1]

Theatrical performance also serves as a metaphor for the migrant experience in *The Satanic Verses* (1988). Rushdie's novel of post-colonial "invasion" and would-be "conquest" invokes various unrealities: the magical transformations of Gibreel and Saladin into angel and goat; both men's denial of the city's realities in favour of imposed "dream-cities" of their own; debates over whether brown-skinned migrants are "really" British. But the performative realm has a special significance. Saladin and Gibreel are performers and purveyors of illusion by profession. As such, they are suited to London, a city whose economy is increasingly geared to the production of intangibles such as advertising, culture, tourism, fashion, and financial services rather than the concrete industrial goods of old. As in Kureishi's novel, Rushdie's London is in many important ways a postmodern city trading in illusions, simulacra, and what David Harvey calls "time-space compression" (284): a city whose defining image could be the Victorian film-set city, the "abridged metropolis" built for the Dickensian musical *Friend!* (421-22). But if theatricality is associated with nostalgia and artifice, *The Satanic Verses* also makes the theatrical an important realm of agency and change. It is through performance and spectacle that Saladin and Gibreel, for better or worse, make things happen. And even if some of their activities are

misguided —their dream-images of London not only illusions but delusions — in this novel about urban and psychic renewal they do in their different ways acknowledge the need for a renovated vision of the "city visible but unseen" (241). For Rushdie, the migrant is not only transformed and metamorphosed as a *result* of London, but can be both spectator and actor in dramatic changes happening to the city because of its new communities.

The Satanic Verses provides a measure of change in the migrant's London since an earlier text like *Bye-Bye Blackbird*. Desai's novel, the story of two Indian migrants with anglophile tendencies who foil each other and finally switch roles, has much in common with Rushdie's and is, I believe, one of its important pre-texts. Both books portray men who would "possess" or "conquer" London developing ambivalent relationships with it. Both begin with arrivals, end with departures, and set late pivotal scenes in the countryside. Both make much of the different ways the city appears from various heights: knowable and containable from above; alienating and offensive at street level; unearthly and deathly from the Underground. Indeed, both novels strongly affiliate what can be *known* of the city with what the seeing eye *perceives*, and what the imagination makes of this — what Kevin Lynch calls the city's "imageability" (10).

The theatrical realm — a specific manifestation of the visual imagination — offers one site where the difference between Desai's London and Rushdie's becomes clear. For Desai's mid-1960s immigrants, theatricality connotes an excluding artifice, not a space of transformation and play with the apparently real. Moreover, for Dev, perceptions of London's "unreality" are driven by anxiety and fascination with imperialism's spatial symbols, together with a tentative will-to-power over them that may involve overlaying them with Indian realities, but most often involves identifying London as the original of its own nostalgic myths. Desai's immigrants are still reacting to the city, largely on its own terms; while it changes them, they do not transform or significantly reterritorialize it. Written in the mode of literary realism, *Bye-Bye Blackbird* constructs a spatially stubborn London still grounded in the imperial past. In Rushdie's mid-1980s London (or "Vilayet"), magic and realism cohabit; his novel portrays a metamorphic city lurching through a painful process of renewal towards a future in which the static spatial and racial geopolitics of the past are rendered obsolete, melted down like the wax effigies of "History" in Pinkwalla's nightclub (292-94).

Rushdie's Saladin begins, not unlike Adit and Dev, holding comfortable delusions of London as a "dream-city" of "poise and moderation" (37). But unlike Desai's protagonists, he moves convincingly beyond this image; he is jolted out of his anachronistic isolation through a kind of magical reality check. Through his mutation into a goatish beast and back again, he is forced to join the crowd — a visibly different crowd now than the one T.S. Eliot associated with the "Unreal City" in *The Waste Land* (65). His Englishness aggressively challenged, his former career and love-life suddenly beyond reach, Saladin is compelled to seek refuge with the Bangladeshi Sufyans, people of his "own kind" that he had formerly avoided (253). His moral education involves dissolving "his old certainties" (259) and finding himself not in his dream-London — he's been "cast from the gates" of that city (257) — but in the multiplicitous"newness" of a city that is continually becoming. As his horns become an icon of inter-racial solidarity, and as he starts acknowledging his previously denied racial identity, Saladin moves into the fluid space of the demographically transformed metropolis. He is forced into the kinds of encounters across race, space, and class divides that metropolitan life constantly promotes and that, as Jacobs remarks, make cities places "saturated with possibilities for the destabilization of imperial arrangements"(5).

Indeed, it is through collectivity and street-level action that Rushdie envisions London's post-colonial renewal, not through the literally top-down fantasies of a tropicalized metropolis imagined by the monomanical Gibreel (354-55). For Rushdie, social transformation happens gradually and communally, not instantly and unilaterally as Gibreel, in his delusory attempts to "redeem" London by angelic imperative, would have it (322). The activist politics represented in the novel, and which Saladin's education requires him to experience, are messy, discordant, and even factionalizing as old racial hierarchies and divisions are challenged. And if the collectivities are grounded in the neighbourhood and ghetto spaces that are the local legacy of imperialism's global segregation of peoples, the transgressions of boundaries endemic to riots aim at the larger obliteration of segregating borders; as Malcolm Cross writes, racial segregation can perpetuate social inequities by making deprivation and differentiation seem natural or common-sensical (111). For Rushdie, the reclaiming of London by immigrants is all about erasing borders and renovating material reality. In some discourses of urban

design, weak or transgressable borders are valued for encouraging the narrative use of space (Sennett 196); Rushdie's narrative places a high value on the intermingling of "incompatible realities" (314) and the generation of "newness" through hybrid combinations. Moreover, if he is conceptually redesigning the city, Rushdie is also, as Vijay Mishra notes, redefining the nation (7-10).

Theatrical performance is all about the design, transformation, and occupation of space; it is also about erecting and interrogating borders — between reality and illusion, on-stage and off-, actors and audience. One model of transgressive performance with particular applicability to Rushdie's vision of city-space is Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of "carnival." While the theories of the grotesque body and Menippean satire that Bakhtin develops from carnival are very applicable to *The Satanic Verses* (though beyond the scope of this paper),[2] the aspect of carnival itself of greatest interest here is its sociopolitical capacity to destabilize official orders and hierarchies. For Bakhtin, carnival is a participatory performance involving spectacle and play, and affiliated with "becoming, change, and renewal"; located "on the borderline between art and life," carnival suspends established norms and social boundaries, and "does not acknowledge any division between actors and spectators" (*Rabelais* 10, 7). Although culturally its world is far from the medieval and Renaissance Europe in which Bakhtin's theory originates, Rushdie's Rabelaisian novel is nonetheless infused with the revolutionary spirit of the carnivalesque. Saladin's old image of London is carnivalized, made topsy-turvy, as he is jolted out of ossified views into the recognition of an urban world characterized by transition, transformation, and uncertainty.

Both Saladin and Gibreel, like Desai's Dev and Adit, undergo processes of radical reorientation towards metropolitan London. All four men find their views of the city transformed over the course of their respective novels, but if Saladin's is the most promising *post-colonial* re-vision — and I believe it is — this is because, despite its elements of surreal fantasy, his experience is grounded in social reality in a way that the others are not. I have shown above some ways in which Dev's and Adit's final comings-to-terms with London are limited. These limitations are partly a function of the solitary detachment and myopia with which both men experience the city; their attitudes to London are formed not through wide-ranging community experience, but mostly internally and unilaterally: in the mental and imaginary realms,

and through literary and theatrical models. Even the novel's most promising post-colonial images of London — Dev's fantasies of Battersea power station as Hindu temple and of English space overlaid with Indian (54, 61) — seem merely idiosyncratic, without social or political valence. Perhaps they *can* be no more than delightfully incongruous fancies in a London so demographically and spatially linked to its imperial past: a city where Indian communities are still at an early stage of formation, and where Indians are outside established power bases and thus mere spectators or witnesses to the occupation and transformation of urban space.

Two decades later, when Gibreel has his similar fancy of a "tropicalized" London, it is as both spectator and actor: he imagines himself to have the power of the Angel Azraeel to dramatically transform the metropolis from on high. The possibilities for empowering agency are certainly stronger in 1980s London, which has larger and more well defined and rooted Indian communities than it did in the 1960s. But Gibreel's model of top-down, unilateral urban renewal proves a negative foil to that of Saladin; not only do his proposals to achieve "increased moral definition" (354) by obliterating shades of grey and reinforcing binaries sound regressive, but Gibreel himself is a deluded man whose grip on reality is tenuous. He is also a largely isolated figure in the novel; his attitudes are derived from extended dreams and misapprehensions about the nature of social change. The effect on the masses he may have as a screen idol, in the realm of theatrical fantasy, does not translate to street-level reality. Saladin's preferable experience of community entanglements is inaugurated by his bodily transformation, which is much more real in its way than Gibreel's. The latter may have a halo, but every time he attempts to do something angelic, he is humbled by his "real" humanity and his illusory empowerment evaporates. Saladin's goat-body is clearly not illusory: the Sufyan girls wonder if it is "a trick, . . . make-up or something theatrical" (257), but his metamorphic eight-foot-high beast-self is a material (if temporary) fact. And this change prompts the kinds of grass-roots community identifications that, in a London increasingly occupied by people of colour, can lead to real, material transformations of urban space and power. Through the recognitions of Saladin, Rushdie posits a London-to-be in which the spectator-actor divisions of personal fancy or conventional theatrics give way to the participatory tradition of carnival. He envisions an inclusive, hybridized, and revolutionary

urban space in which old rigid realities can be played with and changed — a space where the post-colonial migrant need not be just a spectator responding to and influenced by the city, but an actor on stage imagining, performing, and designing its new realities.

Notes and References

1. For a discussion of these aspects of *The Buddha of Suburbia*, see Ball, "Semi-Detached" (20-25).

2. See Bakhtin, *Rabelais* (esp. 303-436) for carnival and the grotesque body; see his *Problems* (esp. 112-37) for carnival and Menippean satire.

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The Discriminations of Postcoloniality in Ireland and New-Zealand

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In Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) Stephen Dedalus's friend, Davin, is tempted sexually by a peasant woman.[1] He declines her offer, but is attracted by the strangeness of the encounter and the frankness of the invitation. Although an ardent nationalist and affectionately described by Stephen as a peasant, Davin has acquired the Dubliner's distance from rural Ireland. He finds the seductions of traditional Ireland exotic and resistable. To Stephen the life of the peasantry is inscrutable and more than faintly repugnant. He fears the 'red-rimmed horny eyes' of an ancient Irish-speaking peasant and feels he must struggle with him 'all through this night till day come'.[2] Yet images of peasant women he has seen from the college bus float through his mind. To Joyce in 1916 the Celtic Revivalist fascination with the peasantry had been important in a negative sense during his earlier strenuous efforts at self-definition. Yet the peasant woman possesses attributes so mixed that he employs the attractions and repulsions of sexuality to figure them.

In 1907 nineteen-year-old Kathleen Mansfield Beauchamp went on a camping trip through the Urewera district of New Zealand and recorded in her diaries her impressions of Maoris, whose distance from colonial bourgeois civilisation she found deeply attractive. The wild Maoris of 'the utter backblocks' she found romantically fascinating; the Anglicised Maoris whom she encountered nearer civilisation she found somewhat distasteful.[3] The same year, back in Wellington with her family, she had an affair with a beautiful and rich young Maori woman named Maata Mahupuku. Later in London she both dressed as a Maori on occasions and reacted with cruel snobbery to a group of coloured intellectuals discussing literature in a night-club.[4]

The ambivalence displayed by both writers in the presence of 'traditional' peoples signals a complex responsiveness to cultural and class differences that cannot simply be explained as romantic projection or its resistance. The strongest feelings - involving awe, fear, excitement, desire - are evoked in both writers by situations where the viewed subjects *seem* to represent the most pure expressions of otherness - where they appear to be least assimilated by modernity, contaminated by the effects of colonisation, or modified by the romanticisms being constructed around them. In Mansfield's case, the most negative emotions are evoked where traditional peoples are seen behaving as Europeans, mimicking the coloniser.[5]

Clearly, these situations are richly embroidered with political, cultural and literary associations. In their ambivalent responses to such figures as an Irish peasant woman at her door or a Maori woman whose face is 'passionate violent - crudely savage' but in whose eyes 'slumbers a tragic illimitable peace'[6] we may find signs of the contradictory forces within both writers and within the colonised societies they inhabited. It was by assimilating these forces that Mansfield and Joyce managed to negotiate paths towards the particular syntheses we describe in their work as modernism. Rather than abandoning the provincial constraints of their societies in favour of a cosmopolitan modernism, both writers carried beyond their native lands the interwoven elements of modernity, tradition, empire and nationalism that had confronted them as young adults. From all these elements they constructed their modernisms.

In this essay I consider firstly how two writers from colonial backgrounds derived specific kinds of modernism from their complex and divided reactions to the demands of nationalism, traditionalism and modernity present in their countries in the first decade of this century. The kinds of modernism they elaborated in the 'mature' writings they produced as exiles were symptomatic of their specific relations to nation, empire and modernity at either side of the turn of the century. In the remainder of the essay I examine the ways in which succeeding generations of writers in Ireland and New Zealand have elaborated 'postcolonial' responses to the places assigned to Joyce and Mansfield by their respective national cultures. I am interested here not only in their changing responses to the issues of language, tradition and nation confronted by Mansfield and Joyce but also in the way in which various postcolonial identities are formulated through the reconfiguring of

national literary icons. Mansfield and Joyce somehow became both the 'Shakespeares' - that is, the generating points - in the literatures of their native lands and exemplars of international modernism.

Postcolonialism, I shall argue, is not a state, a condition, or a moment. It is not rigidly demarcated from a prior and antithetical condition of being colonised. Rather, as Kiberd writes, it is a process that 'is initiated at the very moment when a native writer formulates atext committed to cultural resistance'.[7] Moreover, it continues as long as colonialism has a presence to be resisted in the consciousness of writers and citizens, even though it might have lost its force in the political forms of society. It exists within societies that are still colonised, not merely after they have proclaimed themselves decolonised. Postcoloniality exists within empire itself, without which it would not be possible. In literary terms postcolonialism involves not just 'resistance' but also the attempt to represent the ongoing process of negotiating the positive as well as the negative associations of the colonial condition and legacy; it is practised, moreover, not only by 'native' writers but also by those whose ancestors came as colonisers and, in many cases, by those who find both colonisers and colonised jumbled together in their ancestry.

Fly by those nets

In 1904 the 22-year-old James Joyce, having returned to Dublin from Paris,was compiiing his epiphanies into what would become *Stephen Hero*. It was the year the essay, 'A Portrait of the Artist' and the first story in *Dubliners* were written; it was the year he met Nora Barnacle and eloped with her to Europe. June 16, the day he met Nora, was the day he later designated in *Ulysses* as Bloomsday.

In 1904 Kathleen Mansfield Beachamp, a sixteen-year-old colonial from Wellington, had been installed with her sisters in Queen's College in Harley Street, London, by her socially ambitious father. In the liberal atmosphere of Queen's she was assiduously reversing the effects of migration to the colonies, accumulating cultural rather than material capital and reinventing the '"little savage from New Zealand"' as an aesthete.[8] Around this time, under the influence of a charismatic and advanced schoolteacher, she encountered the writings of Oscar Wilde. Wildean epigrams would figure in her notebooks and diaries over the next few years, and the stylistic markers of *Dorian Gray* would figure prominently in the stories and vignettes she would write on her reluctantreturn to New Zealand in 1906.[9]

Joyce left Dublin for good in 1912. Mansfield finally left Wellington for London in 1908. (A year later Joyce's sister, Margaret, joined a great tradition of Irish internationalism by entering a religious order and emigrating - to New Zealand.) It is generally accepted that in his years in Dublin Joyce collected the storehouse of memories and impressions which were to sustain all his subsequent creative work. The nature and extent of the impress New Zealand left on Mansfield is more contentious. In New Zealand, not surprisingly, Manfield's debt to her homeland has often been privileged, especially in popular biographies. One New Zealand critic has argued that, English critics having misinterpreted her work because of their unfamiliarity with her New Zealand background, 'Mansfield must be repatriated and set in her New Zealand surroundings'.[10] English and American critics, unmoved by nationalist sentiment, have tended to focus on her place in modernism or the feminist implications of her work. Recent postcolonial criticism has stressed her subversions and revisions of contemporary colonial writing.

Easily overlooked are the sources of the *modernism* of both Joyce and Mansfield in specific moments and contexts of high imperial culture. Both began writing when the British empire, having achieved its maximum extension, was confronted by the first wave of nationalisms that would become increasingly clamorous over the next half century and which signalled its eventual demise. Both began writing in societies where modernity was a contested condition, claimed on different terms and for different purposes by the colonised as well as the colonisers and by those ambiguously located between the terms. Their modernism inevitably draws its initial impulses and derives its subsequent developments from the fractured and fractious colonial societies in which they grew up.

Both Mansfield and Joyce determined to write about urban bourgeois life (Joyce lower, Mansfield upper) while still in their native lands at a time when the literature of local experience tended towards sentimentality and favoured romanticised versions of rural life. Joyce's aversion to the Celtic mythicising of the Irish Literary Revival which began around the time of his birth is a famous occasion of his determination not to be limited by the available forms of nationalism. A case could be made that Mansfield made the same kind of formative and self-defining break by refusing to follow the 'Maoriland' style prominent in New Zealand writing in the early 1900s. She set about making her own mode of writing by distancing herself from

an entrenched style in which local colour was provided by Maori myth and inspiring landscapes. Yet these 'breaks' were not as complete as they appear. Rebellious acts of self-definition invariably involve the internalisation of what one is negating. In both cases the official varieties of national writing that were rejected proved powerful enough to figure, albeit parodically, in the subsequent writing. Moreover, the notion of a break rests on binaries-modernity versus tradition, province versus centre, national versus cosmopolitan that obscure the complexity of late colonial cultures. In both Ireland and New Zealand between the 1880s and the First World War modernising tendencies did not merely struggle against nostalgic cultural constructions; the two were worked together in a period of cultural transformation. In leaving their native lands, neither Joyce nor Mansfield abandoned a simple, provincial and unformed society for a complex and fully modern one: all the conditions of modernity that would figure in their writing were present in the societies in which they grew up.

In Ireland, where anti-imperial sentiment was acute, the nationalism that took shape in the late nineteenth century was both nostalgic and modernising in its expressions. To state this is not simply to observe that in looking back to the Celtic past and heroising folk culture, the mainly bourgeois promoters of Irish independence from English rule demonstrated what had been lost as much as what was being preserved. The strong forces impelling Irish cultural and political activism were modernising in the sense they were part of a programme which aimed to bring into being a modern nation state, not a return to pre-imperial social forms[11] - this although, as Kiberd observes, Dublin in 1904 was 'a conurbation dominated by the values and mores of the surrounding countryside'[12] and many among the nationalists, including Michael Collins, fantasised about recreating traditional Ireland in political and social terms in a post-independence state. Yet in pursuing the independence of Ireland *as a nation* they placed themselves in the service of an idea that was inescapably modern. At the symbolic level it might be argued that, as in late nineteenth-century Japan, the versions of the tribal past that were promoted by the 'Revival' were directed at consolidating and extending an independent national identity under the sign of easily recognised cultural markers. The (partly mythicised) past provided a convenient imagery which allowed the modernising agendas of the present to be advanced.

If Ireland (and South Africa) were those parts of the empire where,

as the nineteenth century closed, nationalist rhetoric and agitation were most acute and active, New Zealand was that part where they were least in evidence Among the bourgeoisie of late colonial 'Maoriland', imperial sentiment was vigorously and ubiquitously on display. The British colonists in New Zealand had rapidly achieved military, civil and political dominance over the indigenous people, so much so that by the 1890s the Maori were often represented as a dying race. Half a century after signing a compact with the Maori tribes at Waitangi in 1840, the settlers were in a far stronger position, numerically and in terms of their abilility to realise their power, than were the Anglo-Irishry three centuries after their first taking root as colonists. Unlike the Irish, the Maori could be romanticised from a position of seemingly unassailable superiority. Modernity was a condition entirely at ease with the situation of the colonials. The systematic extension of organised pastoralism, advances in the preservation and shipping of meat, various new technologies improved the material conditions of the settlers generally and brought rapidly increased wealth to Kathleen Beauchamp's father in particular.

Imperial commerce and advances in banking, trade and technology enriched Kathleen Beauchamp's family. However, the economic instability of the urban middle classes and the vagaries of political patronage in post-famine Ireland (aided by John Joyce's personal efforts) served progressively to undo the Joyce family. While Joyce's family declined throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Beauchamps accumulated property, money and status. The moves to different houses made by both families in this period illustrate these differing fortunes.

In 1887 the Joyces moved to Bray, twelve miles from Dublin. It was a large house in Martello Terrace and Joyce's first surviving epiphany recalls an incident there.[13] The family's finances, still stable enough for John Joyce to pay off several mortgages, were to worsen dramatically from 1891 when he was dismissed from his government post, just at the point when Harold Beauchamp began making money 'fast and in large quantities'.[14] James Joyce was then nine years old, four years older than Kathleen when the Beauchamps moved to Karori, a few miles outside Wellington in 1893. 'Chesney Wold', the Beauchamp home, was also a large home, unashamedly Anglophile as its name suggests, and it indicated the consolidation of that process of increase later recorded in Mansfield's New Zealand stories. These

divergent family fortunes reflect differences between the economic fortunes of the two colonies and, more generally, the multiple distinctions that existed within the colonial condition itself: from the declining Irish-Catholic bourgeosie to the rising commercial upper class in Edwardian New Zealand, from Irish small farmers watching their holdings diminish witheach generation to Maori living on communal land and coming under pressure from laws designed to individualise property ownership. They also reflect differences between the two families: Joyce's colonised and Mansfield's colonising.

The nearest New Zealand equivalent to the situation of Irish Catholics was that of the Maori, caught between modernity and tradition, without the distance from those forces of Anglo-Irish aristocrats like Lady Gregory. Romantic nostalgia was simply not an option for Maori, for whom modernity and colonisation were from the outset of settlement connected but not synonymous. Maori eagerly chose what they wanted of the former and fiercely resisted the latter once it became clear that land sales were compromising tribal sovereignties. From the earliest periods of contact Maori were quick to take advantage of the technologies of a more developed material culture. They were also eager to adopt both the English language and writing, as were nineteenth-century Irish Catholics. The Bible, often seen as an instrument of colonial cultural domination, was also an important means of adapting traditional values and beliefs to modernising agendas. Maori nationalist movements in the nineteenth century reworked Old Testament stories of the Chosen People and milennarian aspects of Christianity with traditional beliefs to make local adaptations capable of advancing political and cultural programmes of the day. A recent history of nineteenth-century New Zealand by James Belich sees the Maori as Kiberd sees the Irish: as deliberate and inventive modernisers rather than mere victims of colonisation, continually choosing what they wanted of the colonists' advantages.[15]

By the close of the century Maori nationalist movements had been decisively militarily defeated. The removal of the last Maori threat to orderly settlement and pastoralism was registered by a shift in the stereotypes in whose terms Maori were represented. The Land Wars of the 1860s had been accompanied by an emphasis on Maori savagery. Frederic Maning's *Old New Zealand* (1863), while affectionate in its portrayal of the unredeemed Maori (Maning termed himself a 'Pakeha-Maori', a binary-dissolving oxymoron employed a generation later in Ireland by the 'Protholics'),[16] focused on

cannibalism and superstition, signalling thereby the threat posed by Maori to the settler project of modernisation. Such imagery also indicated the ultimate unfitness of Maori for assimilation. By the close of the century more romantic images prevailed. Maori were a dying race and the remnants of this noble but doomed people were prepared for assimilation. Amateur enthnologists strove to fit Maori into noble traditions aligned circuitously to the myths of origins of the settlers themselves. The 'Aryan Maori' was a suitable subject for assimilation with a British people and worthy of civilising influence.[17]

Both Mansfield and Joyce famously refused to allow the colonial cultures they came from to limit their work, conceiving the choice that faced them in terms of an opposition between provincialism and cosmopolitanism. Nevertheless, for all their efforts to distance themselves from the kinds of writing and the cultural assumptions that ruled their native lands, their rebellions were symptomatic of their colonial societies at that time and indicate not only the states of those societies - ambiguously balanced between nation and colony - but also the choices those societies have made subsequently. Joyce stopped off in London briefly en route to European destinations, but, unlike Wilde or Yeats, he made no effort to establish himself there. If Mansfield became a 'New Zealand European',[18] Joyce became an Irish European six decades before his native country entered Europe on similar terms. Thus Joyce, like Beckett after him, became 'post-colonial' long before the term had currency by refusing to enter into the established dialogue between imperial centre and colonised country or to adopt rhetorically the position of either. Mansfield went straight to London, as her fellow New Zealanders would continue to do once out of the country for most of the twentieth century. But she never managed to feel at home there; she was always the colonial. She became European not out of anti-British sentiment but because of illness and restlessness. Like her country, she entered belatedly and reluctantly into the condition of not being colonial.

Stephen Dedalus misquoted Marx - 'History ... is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake' - and generations of readers have assumed that he spoke for his author.[19] The truth is that Joyce found Irish history - saturated as it was in the rhetoric and affects of colonisation - as inescapable as Catholicism, and he never made Stephen's mistake of assuming that one

could transcend either. Family, nation, religion are the webbing of the nets of history a young man might wish to 'fly by' (and Stephen himself says only 'I shall try to' do so, not that he will), but the desire comes too late - *after* they have been flung.[20] Mansfield found colonial reality as dull as she found her family, and expressed little interest in the brief history of her country. Yet in a poem addressed to the Polish patriot, Stanislaw Wyspianski, she indicates her sense of herself as a woman 'with the taint of the pioneers in [her] blood', that is, a colonial writer with all the guilty consciousness of history that implies.[21] In 1915, after the death of her brother in the British Army she wrote, in a phrase that recalls Stephen Dedalus's line about creating the uncreated conscience of his race, of her desire to bring her 'undiscovered country' to the world's notice.[22]

Nationalist but not patriotic

Declan Kiberd has observed that, '[t]o write a deliberately new style, whether Hiberno-English or Whitmanian slang, was to seize power for new voices in literature: and the pretense of the national poet is that he or she is not constructed by previous literary modes'.[23] In settler countries the descendents of the colonists, at the point where they seek to announce their independence of the parent culture, feel driven to claim indigenous status for their productions. In the literatures of emergent nationalisms this is usually signalled by a preoccupation with language, a deliberate seeking after localised forms of the inherited language. Mark Twain and Henry Lawson anticipated Frank Sargeson by identifying the distinctive forms of national character with the least genteel, urbane and 'colonial' usage. A new literary style rooted in a rough and vigorous vernacular is a sign of an emerging cultural independence.

In New Zealand the moment when the new literature began selfconsciously to appear occurred in the 1930s half a century later than in Australia or Ireland. The strongest voice announcing the cultural-nationalist programme was that of Allen Curnow. Curnow, however, declined to submit as wholly to the vernacular as Twain, Lawson or his contemporary, Sargeson; he tempered his raids on the demotic with a predeliction for a hieratic style. The word 'hieratic' is Yeatsian and points to the forceful example of Yeats in defining New Zealand's moment of national self-definition. Yeats spoke to Curnow because his nationalism was an ambivalent, at times reluctant, one. He indicated how local realities could be made the vehicle of a universal

poetic, lacking in provincialism. As well, Yeats's ambivalence suited the hesitation in Curnow's always reluctant nationalism, his disinclination to turn too steadfastly away from the English literary inheritance.

To strive to be 'nationalist but not patriotic' was Yeats's means of coping with his disappointment at the behaviour of the Irishry he was bent on redeeming.[24] Half a century later and half a world away Curnow chose to remain among an even more recalcitrantly philistine populace in the interest of nation-making. As Kiberd points out, Yeats followed Wilde and Shaw to London, then 'decided to return to Dublin and shift the centre of gravity of Irish culture back to the native capital'.[25] Curnow made the same determination without benefit of the initial obesiance to the imperial centre. Like Sargeson, who regarded Manfield's expatriation as a form of literary betrayal, Curnow held that the writer could only write authentically out of a particular known place. Even if the place was as unpromising as New Zealand in the 1930s, location had to be accepted with same sense of regretful inevitability as the human body.

Curnow and Sargeson set about constructing a national literary culture that celebrated the local and eschewed colonial hankerings, yet at the same time excoriated the present forms of national life. Mansfield, who might have offered a welcome model, became a sign of irresponsible cosmopolitanism. By leaving, by going to Europe, she declined to begin the programme they were engaged in. She thereby found herself, according to Sargeson, in a state of 'suspension', a dangerous situation for a writer.[26]

Mansfield might have stood to New Zealand as Shakespeare to England, except that her exile meant that she could not physically be identified with the country. Heroes had to come from other national founders: Twain, Lawson, Yeats. Notably, the modernist-nationalists of Curnow's generation chose rooted, organic writers rather than internationalists as models. Joyce, another cosmopolitan, is one modernist little in evidence in New Zealand until Maurice Duggan, coming from a Catholic background, determined to break with the ruling colloquial plainstyle of the lapsed-Protestant mainstream. Joyce was also a problem for second-generation modernist Irish writers.

In Ireland by the 1930s the modernist generation provided a variety of models which could be built on, repudiated or slyly subverted. Flann

O'Brien demonstrates the way in which nationalist literary programmes beget detractors, who make their own sub-species of literature by refusing to observe the pieties expected of the genre, which in turn may beget further acts of subversion. O'Brien was deeply influenced by Joyce; he delights in Joycean stylistic pastiche and mockery of the pastoral pieties of the Revival. Nevertheless, he remained determined to maintain a distance from the writer to whom he was often compared. Unlike Joyce, he refused to budge from Dublin or Catholicism. He wrote an early work entirely in Irish. O'Brien declined to choose between being defined as a nationalist writer or a cosmopolitan writer. Without falling back into the attitude of Celtic pastoralism, his aim was to make the material of Ireland, legendary as well as historical, of interest as literature.

In *At Swim-Two-Birds* (1939) he parodies the discourses in which thenation has been constructed, especially the legendary ones favoured by the nationalists. Like Joyce, O'Brien uses Irish legendary material but not in the spirit of the Irish Revival, which he regarded as a fraud. He does not write as part of a nationalist effort of tradition-making. The reasons for this are partly aesthetic: he uses myth not to stir nationalist emotion or to signify local reality but for literary purposes. He regards the stories of the Irish past as pleasing amusing, fertile, but does not treat them with reverence.

In this respect O'Brien looks forward to an anti-traditionalist post-colonial writer like Salman Rushdie, but is opposed to the writing of the Maori Renaissance, in which authenticity and tradition are highly valued terms. In looking back to Joyce with a mixture of respect and resistance O'Brien illustrates the problems in grouping writers under the categories of nationalism or postcoloniality. Kiberd claims that the Irish experience anticipated that of 'the emerging nation states of the so-called "Third World"'.[27] It provided an example that serves to 'complicate, extend and in some cases expose the limits of the current models of postcoloniality'.[28] It is true that Yeats, for example, had an exemplary role for writers in new nationalisms from Tagore to Curnow. Yet what separates the new literatures in which he served as an example and model is greater than what connects them. The danger in eliding such differences is that post-coloniality becomes reduced to the response of one party to the old binary between coloniser and colonised. Postcoloniality applies to the Caribbean, Africa, Australasia the Americas. It includes Tiger economies, settler countries, Third and First

World societies. It encompasses a multitude of differences within each of those societies as well as among them, even where parallels are forcefully apparent.[29]

Modernity and Tino Rangitiratanga

Almost a century after the Gaelic League led a revival of the Irish native language in the 1890s Maori people initiated a revival of their native language. Maori language pre-schools were established from the 1970s and Maori-language immersion programmes were progressively established in primary and secondary schools throughout the 1980s. The Government supported these efforts in the late 1980s and 1990s with funding and teacher training. In 1987 Maori was declared one of the two 'official' languages in New Zealand.

In both cases the language revivals were associated with more general anti-colonial responses to a legacy in which the indigenous people had lost much of their land and economic power as well as their knowledge of the native language. In both cases, sympathetic groups within the colonising elites supported the efforts of the colonised peoples to reclaim what had been lost. In both cases the attempts to revive native languages and cultures coincided with periods of nationalist enthusiasm that involved groups other than the colonised.

Both revivals occurred in times of economic crisis. The Famine had left the Catholic population of rural Ireland demoralised and impoverished. Throughout the late nineteenth century the small holdings of Catholic farmers became less and less viable. In the cities, as in the country, the situation of the Catholic poor was relieved only by emigration. The Catholic middle class remained insecure. In New Zealand a century later the steady improvement of material life (interrupted by periodic trade slumps) which colonisation and modernisation had brought, mainly, though not exclusively to the settlers, had begun to reverse. Ironically this was a result of post-imperial shifts in Europe which significantly benefited Ireland.

Ireland signed a Free Trade agreement with Britain in 1965 and, along with Britain, joined the European Economic Community in 1973. Thus New Zealand's access to its traditional, 'imperial' market was progressively curtailed while Ireland, having long produced the same kinds of products with a less modernised and capital-intensive agriculture, found its markets expanding. As Ireland, invigorated by new arrangements in Europe,

embarked belatedly on a programme of economic modernisation, New Zealand, unnerved by the loss of its colonial ties, drifted towards insolvency and cultural reaction.[30] Ireland from the 1960s became more outward-looking and socially liberal as New Zealand became more inward-looking, provincial and socially divided.

The changes in the New Zealand economy impacted most savagely on Maori people. In the 1950s and '60s Maori people in large numbers had migrated from rural areas to the cities where expanding local industries offered more remunerative work than the seasonal kinds traditionally available in rural areas, but the new jobs were mainly unskilled. From the early 1970s, as Europe progressively closed its markets to New Zealand primary products and the oil shocks increased inflation, the economy suffered a series of crises. When, in the late 1980s, the economy contracted sharply as protected industries were exposed to competition the demand for unskilled labour savagely declined.

Maori nationalism, which had first appeared as sporadic movements of resistance led by prophet figures in the late nineteenth century, appeared again in the 1970s, now frequently led by strong female figures. The protests of the 1970s focused not on jobs and economic issues but on land and language, the key markers of cultural identity. As with the Black consciousness movement in the United States in the 1960s - a source of influence among radicalised young Maori especially - Maori were engaged in constructing an identity around a set of values held to be different from those of the colonising Europeans (the Pakeha). The Pakeha, in this essentialising discourse, stood for the exploitation and despoliation of the land, lack of community and a failure to care for the old, unchecked individualism, the cash nexus as against emotional connection, materialism as against spirituality.

On one level a simple binary established by settler prejudice was being reversed so that all the positives were Maori, all the negatives Pakeha. Yet a more complex process of revaluation was also underway. When Maori writers claimed that the flowering of new Maori literature represented the true beginnings of a local tradition while Pakeha literature was exhausted, they were subverting a longstanding and debilitating pattern established not only by colonisation but also by Pakeha cultural nationalists like Curnow. The struggle for authenticity and independence in the 1980s was not waged between settler and empire, as in the '30s, but between Maori who defined

themselves as tangata whenua (the people of the land) and all those who had come as a consequence of colonisation, however they defined themselves. In this new struggle the downtrodden were cheekily claiming all the clever advantages, just as the Irish had in respect of the English in the 1890s. Suddenly, Polynesian values were seen as ideally suited to the imagination and providing the true basis of a decolonised literature, at once modern and rooted in authentic tradition. Pakeha literary postmodernists and cultural mandarins in the 1980s eagerly endorsed this view, supporting bicultural anthologies and art work as a means of signalling the nation's distance from its monocultural past.[31] As with the Irish case, the old negatives were being reversed so that not only the early British colonisers but also the mid-twentieth-century nationalists were now seen as provincial and outdated, while to be 'native' was to be particularly imaginative by virtue of one's special relationship to (post) modernity and to tradition.

From the outset, then, the Maori Renaissance was both nostalgic and modernising. The issue for Maori in the 1970s as in the 1870s was to find a means of asssimilating modernity to their own purpose and on their own terms, fitting current discourses and technologies to their own patterns of life. The object was to be agents of modernity not its passive recipients. In the early period of contact modernity had been extended to Maori by the colonisers as a civilising benefit, even where this involved chiefly guns, garden implements and the Bible. By the post-World War II period a more concerted effort to modernise Maori life was underway. Not coincidentally, this effort went with the establishment of new import-substitution industries in the major cities, which required new sources of labour. The migration of Maori from rural communities to industrial suburbs went with the provision of state houses, electricity, health services and education. All these were offered in the guise of benevolent improvement, even where the offer concealed blatant Pakeha interests (as when the remnants of the tribe that had controlled the Auckland isthmus were shifted from their 'residentially desirable' site on the seashore to nearby state houses just before the Queen visited in 1953). Modernity in these terms was no longer acceptable.

At the heart of the the cultural contentions of the 1980s lay the complicated issue of Maori sovereignty. Clearly, Maori nationalism was limited in a way Irish nationalism had not been by the overwhelming presence of the colonisers in the country. Nevertheless, the Maori Renaissance

was a broadly based movement whose object, like that of the Irish Revivalists, was the achievement of national independence. Maori nationalism did not aim at the removal of the Pakeha presence, but at decolonising New Zealand so that it might become Aotearoa, a bicultural country involving true partnership between the two separate nations which signed the Treaty. Many Pakeha embraced this latter aim, just as many Anglo-Irish had embraced the nationalist cause.

According to Maori nationalists, Maori sovereignty had been guaranteed by the Treaty of Waitangi which offered to preserve tino rangatiratanga (chiefly authority) in return for Maori agreement to cede kawanatanga (governance). By tino rangatiratanga Maori understood that the integrity of their tribal lands would be respected and their mode of social organisation under their own chiefs would be respected on those lands. They argued that, had sovereignty been ceded, the appropriate word would have been mana (power) rather than kawanatanga, which represented in 1840 the rather loose powers of the govenor to discipline Europeans.

In the 1970s Maori protested about land loss; in the 1980s the argument shifted around the issue of sovereignty. Donna Awatere argued for separateness in *Maori Sovereignty* (1984). Witi Ihimaera's *The Matriarch* (1986) compares the Maori search for nationhood with that of the Italian people of the Risorgimento. In 1989 he rewrote a number of Mansfield's New Zealand stories from a Maori perspective in his centennial gift to the country's major literary figure; *Dear Miss Mansfield* thus celebrates Mansfield's writing and claims her for the bicultural politics of the period. By the late 1980s a tribunal had been established to investigate Treaty claims going back to 1840s as a result of which a number of major settlements were to take place over the next decade. A further shift occurred in the 1990s as arguments developed within Maoridom as to whether the Treaty settlements should be distributed only among tribally-based Maori or shared among Maori generally. The chief dissension involved the right of the many detribalised urban Maori to a share, a dispute that is currently being conducted with great bitterness in the courts.

While some Maori, particularly in the early period of the Maori Renaissance, chose to try to recreate the past by returning to their ancestral lands (or in literary terms by writing versions of pastoral), most remained concerned with how the post-colonial mood of New Zealand from the

mid-1980s might be used to improve the material basis of their lives. Disputes arose over how that might best be achieved, especially when Treaty payments were used to build a capital base by the tribes which settled rather than being distributed to Maori generally on the basis of need. The South Island tribe, Ngai Tahu, that has most fiercely defended traditional tribal affiliations as the proper basis of Treaty claims has also been the most determinedly capitalist in its use of the settlements. Among the many ironies of the period was the transformation of Donna Awatere, radical Maori nationalist in the 1980s, into a member of Parliament in the radically right wing Act Party by the 1990s. (By 'right wing' here I mean economically libertarian.) Maori farmers were also objecting to Producer Boards, a favourite theme of the economic right, and Maori fishermen were the right to fish unrestricted by fisheries legislation, enraging not only Government agencies but also tribal groups with traditional rights to fish particular areas.

Pastoral masks a conflict[32]

The Maori sovereignty movement in the 1980s aimed not only to reclaim economic power but also to encourage a new growth of Maori language users. Maori claimed the native language as one of the taonga (treasures) vaguely protected by the Treaty. As in Ireland, the native language had been suppressed by an English-language education system imposed on the subject populations in the second half of the nineteenth century. In the twentieth century Maori language use in schools was punishable. Stories of the 'tally stick' used by teachers to count lapses into Irish which were followed by punishment and the punishments given to Maori children for speaking Maori at school were important in focusing discontent in both countries.[33] By the early 1970s Maori language users were a tiny percentage of the population, and the number of first-language speakers was rapidly declining. Hence, a revival meant that English-speaking Maori adults and children would need to relearn the language.

Colonial suppression, however, does not of itself explain the loss of native languages in either Ireland and New Zealand. The colonised peoples themselves participated in the loss of their language, believing that their children would have a better chance in life by learning Engish. The languages declined because their users declined to speak them, even during the 1930s and '40s in Ireland where the Government made Irish compulsory in schools and in the Civil Service. The attitude of Maori to their native

language fluctuated historically. English was the language of modernity, hence regarded ambivalently. It was viewed positively at times of material betterment, negatively at a time of disillusionment when economic opportunity was bleaker. During the latter periods, the prestige of the native languages rose as the lure of separateness became more powerful.

In Joyce's *Portrait* Davin's mind is 'armed against' all thought or feeling that came to him 'from England or by way of English culture'.[34] In New Zealand also in the 1980s there were radical decolonisers who sought to extirpate the legacy of English cultural values and habits of thoughts in the minds of colonised and colonisers alike. The desire for purity was also manifest in the effort among Maori language authorities to preserve the language in its pristine (that is, pre-European) state. The Maori Language Commission, established in 1987, did not tolerate the creation of Maori words for modern usage by the transliteration of English forms.[35] Yet at the same time Maori language activists, often young and working in schools rather than universities or government departments, were tolerating more hybridised usages. The Commission promoted an official, mandarin and traditional view of Maori language and culture while in the commercial media - radio, rap music, television - younger Maori were finding forms in which to express the dynamic and street-wise culture of the decaying cities.

The most powerful expression of the latter effort is to be found in Alan Duff's unrelievedly naturalistic novel of domestic and social violence, *Once Were Warriors* (1990). Duff's uncompromising novel is not treated, at least in New Zealand, as 'postcolonial'; unlike other Maori Renaissance writing it does not blame the colonisers for the situation of the colonised, nor does it valorise the organic, pre-colonial past. Instead, it unmasks the conflicts in pastoralism, along with those within the author himself, whose ancestry uneasily combines coloniser and colonised, upper-middle-class Pakeha and poor Maori.

Duff sees the Maori Renaissance as limiting and simplifying the range of Maori attitudes to modernity. For Duff, the writers of the Maori Renaissance failed to engage with the reality of most contemporary Maori life. Maori people in the late twentieth century are predominantly an *urban* people who have allowed themselves to be captured by a false and irrelevant view of the past. They can neither return to the pre-contact world nor, so long as they continue to romanticise the warrior past, live successfully in the modern one.

Joyce distanced himself from the Irish Revival by taking as his subject matter 'petty-bourgeois life in a country where "the countryside is often taken as imagination's proper territory"'.[36] Duff distances himself from the Maori Renaissance by taking as his subject matter the world of the urban poor, the 'bottom-drawer people', at a time when Maori writers were expected to view that world from the perspective of a richer, traditional and organic world from which it had lapsed.[37] Yet the past is important to Duff as a means of revisioning and changing the material conditions of the present. In *Once Were Warriors* the warrior ideal appears as the parody of traditional warriorhood practised by the Brown Fists, the Maori gang, and in Jake Heke's compulsive violence. Both the Brown Fists and Jake associate their ability to receive and inflict pain with the warrior code.Yet their violences are a sign of the loss of traditional cultural values. As Beth Heke puts it, 'The Maori of old had a culture, and he had pride, and he had warriorhood, not this bullying, man-hitting-woman shet'.[38] The source of blame for violence, then, is not simply colonisation but the corrupt version of traditional culture embraced both by the privileged pastoralists promoting the Maori Renaissance and the underclass of 'warriors' in the bars and slums of the cities.

Duff's signal achievement lies not in his trenchant criticism of the attitudes associated with the Maori Renaissance but in his having registered in literary English a Maori-English demotic. He is the first New Zealand novelist utterly to saturate his writing in this speech form. The language of *Once Were Warriors* is that of the cities, the bars, the prisons and slums, not the formal Maori promoted by the Maori language Commission or the proper English regarded as the necessary path of social advancement for the underclasses. For all the crudity of the novel's language *Once Were Warriors* indicates a potentially rich seam of Maori-inflected English, distinct both both from the traditionalist Maori of the Commission and the colonial English still taught in the elite, anglophile schools. Adequately to register this hybridised form in his fiction Duff will need to learn from the Irish writers of the modernist generation who, in concocting an English steeped in the character of Irish speech, invented a richer literary expressive form than the English of their contemporaries writing in England. If this is to happen the angry war between the cultural and linguistic forces informing his fiction will need to give way to an entente effected by a more synthesising and selfconscious literary intelligence.

More crucially, the struggle in his writing between a dominant naturalism and a thwarted but irrepressible aestheticism will be need to be resolved. Colm Toibin, reviewing a collection of recent New Zealand fiction, has observed that Duff, like the Irish novelist Roddy Doyle, desires uregently to 'make poetry' out of the speech of dispossessed workers.[39] In other words, Duff is fighting a discursive war against the 'owners' of English (inncluding the pale version of the *New Zealand Listener*, of which Duff's grandfather was editor) in a fragile, fractured and uneasily postcolonised society. The problem is that in Duff's writing as much of the negative energy is directed inwards against what seem to be repudiated aspects of the self rather as is directed outward, against his various ideological enemies. In a sense, Duff, is caught like Stephen Dedalus between the desire to transcend an imprisoning society and the entrapment of the mind that circles round and round what it would leave. The obvious solution to this problem is to learn from both Mansfield and Joyce, whose writing oscillates perpetually between leaving and returning and derives its force from the achievement of a balanced tension.

Perhaps also Duff might look back to an unlikely Irish source, mediated conveniently by way of Katherine Mansfield, for a means of reconciling the violent struggle his prose enacts between aestheticism and naturalism. At the beginning of the century, in a phrase modelled on Wilde's paradoxes, Katherine Mansfield suggested that the solution for New Zealand artists seeking to treat the natural features of the country adequately was to become more 'artificial'.[40] The New Zealand writer to have applied that lesson most elaborately thus far is Janet Frame. Yet an inventive reading of New Zealand literature starting with Samuel Butler's Erewhon (1872) and progressing to the postmodern writers of the 1990s by way of Curnow and Frame might hope to demonstrate that 'postcolonial' writing in New Zealand, quite as much as in Ireland, has long involved the recognition that nations are invented not discovered.

Notes and References

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[2] Joyce, *Portrait*, p. 252.

[3] Margaret Scott, ed., *The Katherine Mansfield Notebooks* Vol. I (Wellington, Lincoln

University Press/Daphne Brassell, 1997), p. 138.

[4] Antony Alpers, *The Life of Katherine Mansfield* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p.216.

[5] Bridget Orr, 'Reading with the Taint of the Pioneer: Katherine Mansfield and Settler Criticism', *Landfall* 43 no. 4 (December 1989), pp. 455-6.

[6] Ian A. Gordon, ed., *The Urewera Notebook*, by Katherine Mansfield (Wellington, Oxford University Press, 1978), pp. 84-5.

[7] Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation* (London: Vintage, 1996), p. 6.

[8] See Claire Tomalin, *Katherine Mansfield: A Secret Life* (London: Viking,1987), p. 23.

[9] See Vincent O'Sullivan, 'The Magnetic Chain: Notes and Approaches to K.M.', *Landfall* 29 no. 2 (June 1975), pp. 95-131.

[10] Heather Murray, 'Katherine Masnfield and her British Critics: Is There a "Heart" in Mansfield's Fiction', *Journal of New Zealand Literature*, no. 6 (1988), p. 113.

[11] See Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland*, p. 134.

[12] Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland*, pp. 484-5.

[13] Peter Costello, *James Joyce: The Years of Growth, 1882-1915* (London: Kyle Cathie, 1992), p. 91.

[14] James Fairhall, *James Joyce and the Question of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 41; Tomalin, A Secret Life, p. 8.

[15] James Belich, *Making Peoples: A History of the New Zealanders from Polynesian Settlement to the End of the Nineteenth Century* (London and Auckland, Allen Lane/Penguin, 1996).

[16] Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland*, pp. 418-27.

[17] Edward Tregear, in *The Aryan Maori* (George Didsbury/Government Printer, 1885; Sept., Papakura: R. McMillan, 1984), uses comparative philology and comparative mythology to demonstrate Maori affinities with Nordic peoples. He argues that the Maori are the descendents of the ancient Aryan peoples,having journeyed to New Zealand as part of that 'wonderful spirit of enterprise and colonization which has always distinguished their race',p. 2. Tregear maintains that the Maori language 'has preserved, in an almost inconceivable purity, the speech of his Aryan forefathers, and compared with which the Greek and Latin tongues are mere corruptions', p. 5.

[18] Vincent O'Sullivan, *Finding the Pattern, Solving the Problem: Katherine Mansfield the New Zealand European* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 1989).

[19] James Joyce, *Ulysses* (New York: Random House, 1934), p. 35.

[20] Joyce, *A Portrait*, p. 203.

[21] Katherine Mansfield, 'To Stanislaw Wyspianski', in *The Oxford Anthology of New Zealand*

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[22] *Journal of Katherine Mansfield*, 22 January 1916, edited by John Middleton Murry (London: Constable, 1954), p. 94.

[23] Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland*, p. 126.

[24] Fairhall, *James Joyce and the Question of History*, p. 46.

[25] Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland*, p. 3.

[26] Frank Sargeson, *'Katherine Mansfield' in Conversation in a Train and Other critical Writing*, edited by Kevin Cunningham (Auckland: Auckland University Press/Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 32.

[27] Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland*, p. 4.

[28] Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland*, p. 5

[29] See Stuart Murray, 'Post-colonial Theory and Modern Irish Culture', review article on *Inventing Ireland*, by Declan Kiberd and *Transformations in Irish Culture*, by Luke Gibbons, Irish Historical Studies, xxx, no. 119 (May 1997), pp. 452-61.

[30] The 'reaction' was most pronounced during the Prime Ministership of Robert Muldoon whose government sent a New Zealand frigate in support of Mrs Thatcher's late imperial adventure in the Malvinas/Falklands.

[31] See, for example, *The Penguin Book of New Zealand Verse*, edited by Ian Wedde and Harvey Mc Queen in 1985, which set poetry in the Maori language alongside English-language writing and thereby announced the cultural and linguistic transformation that had occurred since Allen Curnow edited the first *Penguin Book of New Zealand Verse in 1960*.

[32] For an extended argument on this theme see William Empson, Some Versions of Pastoral: *A Study of the Pastoral Form in Literature* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1935).

[33] Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland*, p. 143; Mihi Edwards, Mihipeka: *Early Years (Auckland: Penguin*, 1990).

[34] Joyce, *Portrait*, p. 180.

[35] In 1987 the Commission published *Te Matatiki*, a glossary of contemporary Maori words. As part of its objective to extend the linguistic range of Maori the Preface invoked the Commission's preferred method of 'weaving together into new combinations current speech, and words and phrases which have fallen out of everyday use'. Thus 'chilly-bin' is rendered in Maori as tokanga matao, combining tokanga 'a large basket for food' and matao 'cold', p. vii.

[36] Fairhall, *James Joyce and the Question of History*, p. 46.

[37] Witi Ihimaera, *The New Net Goes Fishing* (Auckland: Heinemann, 1985), p. 65.

[38] Alan Duff, *Once Were Warriors* (Auckland: Tandem, 1990), p. 28.

[39] Colm Toibin, Review of *The Picador Book of Contemporary New Zealand Fiction*, edited

by Fergus Barrowman, in Landfall, new series, 4 no. 1 (Autumn 1996), p. 133.

[40] *The Letters and Journals of Katherine Mansfield: A Selection*, edited by C.K. Stead (Allen Lane, London, 1977), p. 26.

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Travesties : Romance and Reality in the *Raj Quartet*

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Paul Scott's **Raj Quartet** is generally recognized as a brilliant analysis of the end of empire. However, the prevalent impression is that Scott's is a romantic elegy, concerned with a range of deeply committed Britishers forced to abandon a land they have regarded warmly as their own. Of course there are problems, but these are largely due to outsiders such as Ronald Merrick who, for reasons connected with his class as well as his sexuality, acts as the snake in paradise[1]. When his destructive urges are supported by separatist Indians, it is no wonder that mayhem results, destroying the dreams of the committed Britishers as well as, though naturally less importantly, the lives of several Indians.

This view has been crystallized as it were by the beautiful television serial called, tellingly, 'The Jewel in the Crown' after the first book in the **Quartet**. The title contributes to the very positive image, eschewing the neutrality of the word **Quartet** as well as the dark ideas conveyed by the titles of the other three books. The social and psychological tensions which Scott lays out so tellingly as having been caused by the Raj are ignored in favour of spectacle. War, civil war, sex and sadism are brought to the fore, and the actual dilemmas faced by one race keeping another in subjection are rarely considered,

This is perhaps understandable in what purports to be nothing more that a popular television serial. Yet even in the critical analysis, limited as it is for a work that should have commanded more attention, what we have is broad historical detail supplemented by analysis of the characters central to the romance. Daphne and Hari Kumar, Sarah and Merrick, are considered in detail, while to shed light on them we have other generally positive figures such as Edwina Crane and Barbie Batchelor and even John and Mabel Layton.

In a companion paper to this I intend to look at Scott's women, to trace his analysis, using them as symbols, of a relationship that he believed demanded

commitment, but which rarely found it. Here I shall deal with some of his male characters, and explore the connections he established between them in his indictment of what he saw as a betrayal of an ideal. I will not look here at Merrick, in part because I shall deal with him elsewhere, but also because he has been done to death[2]. My purpose rather is to establish the links between someone so obviously presented and recognized as a villain and others whom I believe Scott examines without sentimentality but who remain canonized as part of the self deception with which Britain clothed its imperial exploits. Indeed my argument is that his indictment of them is even more important, for while Merrick might have seemed an exception the fact that he could flourish was because those others granted him license. And they granted him license because their affinities were, despite their ideals, to their own dark side which Merrick represented, rather than to the aliens to whom they could never quite completely commit themselves.

Scott's criticism even of those he presents very positively is clear. Thus Sarah, once she begins to think about the situation of the British in India, is able to look without illusions at the manner in which her father lost faith in the ideal image he had once had of his relationship with the Indians under his command. She can see straightforwardly why he came to a

> *notion of its futility. Man-Bap. I am your father and your mother. This traditional idea of his position, this idea of himself in relationship to his regiment, to the men and the men's families, had not survived his imprisonment; or, if it had survived, the effort of living up to it had become too much for him. Was it lack of energy or lack of conviction, I wondered* (DivS: 344)

Thus, though the passage that follows makes clear that Colonel Layton's sense of obligation goes much deeper than that of his wife, the fact is that it cannot survive a crisis. The 'notion' that hits him at this point does so because of his incapacity to visit the village or the family of the havildar from his regiment who had deserted, who is at this very time being driven to suicide by Merrick's questioning. But the point is not so much that Layton is now an ineffectual old man superseded by Merrick and his harshness, but that Layton's own woolly sense of doing good had had no underlying principle that allowed for the establishment of a real relationship. His conviction that '*"he could straighten Havildar Muzzafir Khan out in ten minutes"*' (92) may have been sincere. But there is little doubt that he would have been incapable of appreciating the

probable reasons for desertion. And this incapacity was because he too was in the end more concerned about his own position within the Imperial relationship, even if in terms of his own obligations, rather than about the expectations engendered by that relationship. In a sense he had made his choice when he allowed Mabel to keep it quiet that she was making a donation to the victims of the Jallianwallah Bagh massacre rather than to Dyer: '*"I'm keeping it dark for your sake," Mabel told him, but with an edge in her voice that made it sound ad if she felt he had personally driven her to secrecy. "People would misunderstand. They usually do. You have a career to think of."*' (DayS: 61) When he acquiesced in this, even to the extent of keeping Mabel's action a secret from his wife, John Layton had set the seal on what he had perhaps in effect chosen when he opted for the army as a career. So at a time of strain he cannot even live up to what he had thought he upheld.

What might be termed the noticeably ethnocentric attitude of the military to the Imperial relationship is clear from the reflections of Robin White, the Deputy Commissioner at Mayapore, on the brutal quelling of the riots by Brigadier Reid that prompted '*a rather sordid joke going round among Mayapore Indians that if you spelt Reid backwards it came out sounding like Dyer who shot down all those unarmed people in the Jallianwallah Bagh in Amritsar in 1919*' (TS: 75). White claims that '*my association with Reid was fairly typical of the conflict between the civil and the military*'. Though he later withdraws the generalization his clarification emphasizes what one would in any case have expected from the differences in the stated goals of the two services -

> *The drama Reid and I played out was that of the conflict between Englishmen who liked and admired Indians and believed them capable of self-government, and the Englishmen who disliked or feared or despised them, or, just as bad, were indifferent to them as individuals, thought them extraneous to the business of living and working over there, except in their capacity as servants or soldiersor dots on the landscape. On the whole civil officers were much better informed about Indian affairs than their opposite numbers in the military.* (JC: 315)

Reid's own narrative as presented by Scott forcefully illustrates these negative characteristics.[3] The narrative includes in the first few pages an element that Scott often uses, namely a deficiency with regard to communication at the private level that reflects public inadequacy too. Reid's desire to get away from

his wife and assume his command at Mayapore, rather than share with her the knowledge that she is terminally ill, may seem to spring from reserve. But, as Scott shows clearly when Sarah wishes to speak to her father about the abortion she has had and he firmly rejects her initiative, we can see as underlying such reserve an insensitivity that springs from a fundamental incapacity to share.

The public expression of this is of course much more marked. Though Reid claims to have '*dedicated his life*' to India, it is to India as '*the very cornerstone of the Empire*' and one of his very first acts in Mayapore indicates a basic distrust of Indian soldiers as well as a lack of concern about their comfort

> *Conscious of the problem involved in appearing to make a distinction I nevertheless felt that Johnny Jawan would be less uncomfortable in Banyaganj than was Tommy Atkins. Also, in moving the Berkshires into the Mayapore barracks there was in my mind the belief that their presence in the cantonment might act as an extra deterrent to civil unrest ..... I had, in any case, determined to use British soldiers in the first instance in the event of military aid being required by the civil power.* (JC: 265-6)

This is followed by a bitterly myopic account of Indian aspirations towards independence. Reid declares conclusively that the very limited act of 1935 '*seemed to a man like myself (who had everything to lose and nothing to gain by Indian independence) a Statesman-like, indeed noble concept, one that Britain could have been proud of as a fitting end to a glorious chapter in her imperial history*' (268). White's reflections on the subject that follow are scarcely necessary to make clear the self-interest that motivates what on occasion there is not even at attempt to disguise as paternalism - '*Apart from the strategic necessity of holding India there was of course also the question of her wealth and resources.*' (284)

It is scarcely surprising therefore that, given Reid's belief that any political agitation at this time is simply a dastardly attempt by Indians to take advantage of the difficulties caused by the war, he puts down with excessive force the protests at Mayapore that began over the arrest of Congress leaders after the 'Quit India' resolution and were intensified by reports of the brutal treatment of the suspects in the Bibighar rape case. The concluding sections of his narrative are brilliantly used by Scott to expose the complacence with which he dismisses the particular causes of grievance amongst the Indians at that time.

He is laconic about the '*Number of incidents in which firing was resorted to: 23*' (309). No explanation is deemed necessary for the fact that this figure seems excessive both in terms of the number of such incidents in the country at large, and in terms of the population figures Scott had carefully given us at the beginning of the fourth section of the book. Nor, understandably, is there any expansion deemed necessary of the comparatively low figures for dead and wounded as the 'result of firing' that Reid records officially, even though his previous narrative had already indicated what is made crystal clear in The Towers of Silence that '*a larger than average number of Indians was killed or wounded in Mayapore and Dibrapur... the number of dead in Mayapore, considered uncomfortably high by the authorities, was accounted for chiefly by people drowned in the river when scattering in panic at the sound of rifle fire and the sight of troops on both sides of the Mandir Gate bridge.*' (74-5). Though I think Scott intends us to see here a basic disingenuity, it is also clear that it would be misleading to characterize it as conscious dishonesty. Rather, for Reid the fact that so many lives were lost simply did not matter, for they belonged only to '*dots on the landscape.*'

Far more important to him was the fact that his wife was dying of cancer and his son had been captured by the Japanese. Perhaps equally unsurprisingly those facts weighed heavily too with the chorus of white women whose comments are so sharply depicted in **The Towers of Silence**. That someone suffering from an emotional strain that might be thought relevant when judging his actions should not have the power of life and death over people was not a concept that would have occurred to them with regard to people so demonstrably different. On the contrary, the reason for the strain comes in useful when the authorities who did think the number of dead '*uncomfortably high*' feel obliged to act. No inquiry is held into the incidents, Reid is not reprimanded, and he gets away thinking that his transfer was merely on compassionate grounds on account of his wife's death.

What is, not I think surprising given what I have argued is the basic thrust of Scott's work, but certainly more worthy of comment is the fact that even Robin White did not think Reid's conduct demanded any adverse official criticism. His response to Reid's narrative had indicated fundamental differences in their attitudes. He is forthright in his criticisms of what he describes as '*Reid's jejune account of the 1935 scheme for Federation*' (332), and indeed of Reid's whole analysis of the British response to the movement for independence, including its continuation during the war which had seemed so appalling to Reid - '*what Reid meant by Indians and English sinking differences was the Indians*

doing all the sinking, calling a halt to their political demands and the English maintaining the status quo and sinking nothing' (316). He had recognized both the immorality of and the provocation offered by the arbitrary powers of arrest available under the Defence of India Rules. He had made clear to Reid that if he had as chief civil authority in the district to call in the assistance of the military he could not have thought of it *'"as anything but one of my personal failures"'* (282)[4]. Yet when, from the point of view of these ideals, everything goes wrong and not only, albeit under instructions from his superiors, does he have to order arbitrary arrests but he even has to call in the military, he does not deem it necessary to take any steps in accordance with his theoretical beliefs. Indeed he even goes to the extent of engaging in comradely heroics with the intention of defending Reid -

> *My commissioner asked me to comment on Reid, confidentially... I gave it as my opinion that Reid had at no time exceeded his duty ..... I didn't see why Reid should carry the can back for people who had panicked at provincial headquarters... For a time I expected to be moved myself, but the luck or ill-luck of the game fixed on Reid - unless it were really true that his posting could be put down to the influence of friends of his who thought that following the death of his wife he would be happier if employed in a more active role. It is so easy - particularly when looking for a chosen scapegoat of an action you have taken part in - to hit upon a particular incident as proof that a scapegoat has been found when, in fact, the authorities have simply shrugged their shoulders, and a purely personal consideration has then stepped in and established the expected pattern of offence and punishment.* (328-9)

That last sentence seems to me to sum up the difference between Robin White and someone like Edwina Crane who felt herself impelled to action in fulfilment of her commitment. White saw himself very much as part of a system and, though he could theorize at length, generally in a very melancholy manner, about how and why the system went wrong, he has no personal incentive to rise above it or to make restitution. Thus, though he admires Gandhi's openness and though he has his doubts about the wisdom of arresting the Congress Party leaders, he cannot express those doubts publicly. When he is given instructions to arrest them he cannot but fulfil his instructions. Though he is unwilling to *'make the fullest use of the military'* and though at the time the instructions come through from above he has already seen at the affair on the Mandir Gate

bridge what the military was capable of, he allows Reid to '*have his way about Dibrapur*' because he could not withstand '*the pressure from Reid, the pressure from provincial headquarters, and the pressure of my own doubts*' (328). And after the whole business he is quite content to let it all rest, without either resigning or making some acknowledgment of what in his own words had to be regarded as a personal failure, or else pressing for an inquiry if the responsibility seemed to lie elsewhere.

We can see the same sort of inadequacy in his attitude to the boys arrested with regard to the rape. His primary excuse is that '*the job of suppressing the riots distracted our full attention from the boys suspected of rape*' (330) which is clearly in adequate since it is apparent from Reid's narrative that the troubles had been exacerbated by the treatment of the boys. It was therefore at the very least irresponsible for White to have given his assistant '*the job of conducting the various inquiries*' (313) and to have contented himself with regard to the rumours of ill-treatment with having '*warned Merrick to "stop playing about"*' (330), even though it was clear from what Merrick volunteered to him that there was reason for the rumours that were inflaming the populace[5]. Much more serious was his acquiescence in the ploy to continue keeping the boys in detention under the Defence of India Rules, the existence of which in any case White found reprehensible, when it was clear that a charge of rape would not stick.

White's limitations are made even clearer by the way in which he continues to attempt to justify himself despite the fresh evidence that has been placed before him. He grants that Vidyasagar's deposition was doubtless accurate but minimizes its importance because *Vidyasagar ranks as a self-confessed lawbreaker so that's neither here nor there.*' (329). Though he claims to be '*uncomfortably aware of having failed to investigate the rumours more fully*', he still remains reluctant to admit the enormity of what had happened, even while being able to see the reason for this reluctance - '*I expect my objections to your conclusions are really based on my inner unwillingness to accept the unsupported evidence of Merrick's behaviour - or to admit my own failure to suspect it at the time.*' I think Scott's insistence on this tortuousness where White's own responsibility was concerned, juxtaposed with his widespread liberalism when engaging in historical or theoretical analysis, is designed to make clear not only his inner failure of commitment but also the rather sad defences put up by a man incapable of living up to his own ideals[6].

So, though it is clear to authorities elsewhere, as the account in the other books in the **Quartet** makes clear, that even the original picture of what had happened with regard to the Bibighar suspects was embarrassing, as far as White is concerned Merrick is to be relied upon more than the Indians. Similarly, though it was apparent that excessive force had been used in the quelling of the riots, Reid was a part of the system just as White was and therefore he had to stand by him. Though White was the head of the civil administration in his district, while the system could be blamed for anything that went wrong, there was no need in his conception of his role for him to feel any deep remorse about the part he had played in it.

White of course is not alone in this. We have been introduced before to Knight, the director of the British-Indian Electrical Company who had been to a public school and who got on very well with Hari when he first applied for a job and it turned out that he had been to the same sort of school; but who in the end went along with his Technical Training Manager who was unwilling to deal with an Indian who was not obsequious and spoke with a better accent than he did. Knight was described by the Indian editor of the paper for which Hari later worked as '*a two-faced professional charmer whose liberal inclinations had long ago been suffocated by his mortal fear of the social consequences of sticking his neck out*' (243). And in Hari's own description of the second interview, when he seems to have been looking for signs of subordination, we see the superficiality of any camaraderie Knight might have felt, his inclination to point out that '*this wasn't Chillingborough and that I should start learning how to behave in front of white men.*' (240)

An even more important example of the discrimination almost unavoidable even for those who might originally have thought their liberal inclinations stronger is provided by Hari's old friend at school Colin Lindsey. When he sets off for India he assumes that he will see Hari, but when he gets to Mayapore he does not attempt to get in touch with him. It is in fact conceivable that he deliberately ignores Hari on the occasion after which Hari goes off and gets drunk and thus has his first unfortunate meeting with Merrick; certainly it is clear that Lindsey applies for a transfer as soon as possible so that he might get away from a place where he might have found himself in an embarrassing position. His actual thinking on this point is never made clear, and it is interesting that the narrator of **The Jewel in the Crown**, though he is in touch with Lindsey later and has access to the letters Hari wrote him, never opens up the question

there. What we are meant to understand however is I think made clear by Perron's reflections later on Nigel Rowan's suggestion that Lindsey had been lacking in confidence -

> *Assuming mutual recognition, over-compensation for lack of confidence seems to me a curious way of describing Lindsey's behaviour... if there was mutual recognition, one has to assume that Lindsey saw nothing so clearly as the embarrassment that would follow any attempt to renew an old acquaintance in such very different circumstances... Little to do with over-compensation for lack of confidence, but a lot to do with straightforward self-protection from the consequences of having a friend who was no longer socially acceptable and who might turn out to be a pest, the sort of Indian who as the rai so often said would try to take advantage.* (DivS: 300-1)

The point is that it was just plain callousness that led to such a belittling attitude towards Indians: overriding any obligations to them was the obligation of racial solidarity, and in the preservation of one's relations with one's peers Indians could always be reduced to '*dots on the landscape*'. In the cases of Lindsey and Knight this basic affinity with Reid is clear despite what might have been liberal inclinations; Scott's more important insight is that the same is true even of Robin White. In spite of his theoretical understanding of the situation, in spite of his real affection for certain aspects of India, in the last resort his allegiance was to his position within the rai rather than to the people whose welfare was by his lights the only justification of that position[7].

This aspect is fully developed in the character of Nigel Rowan who is presented I would suggest as the characteristic official representative of British India in **A Division of the Spoils**. His significance may not be easy to grasp because at first glance he seems a hovering spectre rather than a protagonist. Yet this is in itself relevant, in the first place because he can be seen as a sort of balance to Guy Perron, the observer whose attitudes and responses are in line with those Scott clearly intends to evoke in us, more importantly because whereas in a sense Perron is entitled to remain an observer Rowan has an obligation, by virtue of his active involvement in the Imperial situation, to act. His incapacity to do so is, I would suggest, very clearly presented as the hallmark of his inadequacy.

Rowan's first appearance in **The Day of the Scorpion** in connection with the re-examination of Hari Kumar had suggested this, though it takes the revelation

of his reflections and observations on the subject in the last book to make clear the full enormity of the mechanisms within which he functioned[8]. During the examination Rowan tries to keep Hari off the subject of what had happened to him after his arrest by Merrick on suspicion of the rape, and ensures that the most damning evidence as to Merrick's behaviour during the interrogation is kept off the record. It is only because of the insistence of the Indian Civil Servant who accompanies Rowan that Hari is enabled to give the full picture of what had occurred, to make clear the actual reasons for his victimization[9].

For what emerges in **A Division of the Spoils** is the tremendous casuistry that behaviour such as Rowan's could entail. What must I think be described as the concomitant failure in moral principle extends as well to Rowan's superior, the Governor George Malcolm whom we have seen before attempting to entice the former Chief Minister Kasim away from the Congress Party. In Hari's case it is clear to Malcolm as well as to Rowan that the political grounds on which he, and the other boys too, had continued to be detained were remarkably thin. But Hari's aunt's pleas were ignored, and Malcolm only reopens the case at the request of Lady Manners; though she informs him that Daphne had absolved Hari of the rape he thinks it a pity Rowan '*hadn't been able to stick to the political evidence*'. And then, despite what emerged, though he '*could order Kumar's immediate release simply on the basis of the transcript of the examination*', he '*was reluctant to do so without the approval of both the member for Home and Law and the Inspector-General*' (315-6), the former of whom happened to be an Englishman as well. In short, injustice or suffering were less important than the preservation of the facade.

Both Rowan and Malcolm felt that even the truncated record of the examination had to be edited, on the grounds that the Inspector-General would be so shocked by even what remained of Hari's allegations that he would insist on keeping him locked up. It is perhaps to suggest that this was less important than keeping the official British record clean that Scott points out that even with the edited transcript the Inspector-General proved adamant. His excuse now was Kumar's tenuous connection with Pandit Baba, who had once tried to teach him Hindi. Malcolm describes this as a '*"red herring the IG's suddenly noticed"*' (318), and how right this is is apparent from the fact that his objections vanished after Merrick had been injured and decorated. After that Merrick was too exalted for Hari's release to have reflected adversely on the fact that he had arrested him originally, and this was all that mattered, not the farfetched idea

of a connection with Pandit Baba that had been so conveniently trotted out. In a sense, travesty of justice though it was, the Inspector-General's attitude is not surprising, in that Merrick was one of his own men, in a department not generally known for its liberalism. What is appalling is Malcolm's acquiescence in this, his cavalier remark about the 'red herring', '*"So, let it lie"*', even though he had the power to act on his own and had no doubt about an injustice that was crying out for rectification. And equally appalling is Rowan's willingness too to let the matter lie, though he had conducted the examination and been able to note the effect of imprisonment on the Hari Kumar he remembered from school. Neither was willing to stick his neck out for what he knew was right, and I believe Scott intends to emphasize this point when, in undertaking to help Kumar after he is finally released, '*I suppose I was sticking my neck out," Gopal said, "but that is what necks are for."*' (321)

Appropriately enough, Rowan recalls in relating the story to Perron the phase Merrick had used to taunt Hari, '*"What price Chillingborough now?"*' (DayS: 304, DivS: 313)[10]. It is not only that Rowan's loyalties to Merrick or rather the regime he represents go deeper than his loyalties to Hari and to the ideal of trusteeship he might have been thought to exemplify; it is also that Rowan's own career in India makes clear the bitter realities behind what he might have thought he had absorbed at his old school, as suggested in the exchanges between him and Hari at the examination that Lady Manners overheard -

> *"You would call Chillingborough a liberal institution?"*
>
> *"It wasn't a flag-wagging place. It turned out more administrators than it did soldiers."*
>
> *She smiled and wondered if Rowan smiled too to be reminded so unexpectedly of his own words - "I wasn't cast in the mould of a good regimental officer".* (DayS: 271)

Despite this Rowan had joined the army because he had when young shared the view he notes in Sarah when she was discussing her uncle's efforts during the war to persuade Englishmen who had come out to India only because of the war to stay on afterwards. Scott I think uses the passage not only to point out how the very fact of Uncle Arthur's occupation indicated the assumption of the British that they would be staying on for some time in India after the war, but also to show how Rowan's attitude had changed after he came out to India and

he was no longer as idealistic as he had been at school about a swift transition to the Indians -

> *In the course of her argument she used the word Indianisation, which suggested that the one criticism of her uncle's efforts she would accept as valid was that they were not officially directed as thoughtfully as they could have been to that end. In a girl of her type such a view was unusual. It was one he shared. It had lain immature and unformed behind his youthful decision to seek a military and not a civil career in India; a decision he had regretted and sought to remedy before the war by undergoing a probationary period in the Political Department, in the hope of transferring to it permanently.* (DivS: 152)

Thus he is able to tell Lady Manners that he always wanted to serve in the political department, and in thinking of '*applying what talent he had*' in the princely states he is convinced as he tells Bronowsky that '"*There is an obligation to the princes on our part. I should say that it's been made clear often enough that we recognize it.*"' (166) It is characteristic therefore that we find him at the end seeking to prove to the recalcitrant Nawab. of Mirat that he had no alternative except to accede to India. As I have said before, I do not think Scott had any doubt about the desirability of such accession, and in that sense I have little doubt that he thought Rowan's political attitude preferable to that of Rowan's superior, Robert Conway, who was trying to prevent the accession of Gopalakand. Yet while Scott shows sympathetically that Conway was prepared to fight for a principle however misguided, the various references to the different phases Rowan has gone through are I think intended to underline the fact that he was without principles at all, that whatever he was expected to think in the interests of the mechanism within which he functioned became his ideal.

What might be termed this basic unsoundness in Rowan, his ultimate unreliability where commitment was required, is made clear in the sexual sphere, in consonance with the symbolism we see elsewhere in the **Quartet**. Firstly, in **A Division of the Spoils**, there is his interest in Sarah so that is seems clear that when he goes up to Pankot he might very well propose to her; however, he drops the idea when he learns that Merrick is going to marry Susan. Interestingly, just as in the case of Hari, Perron realizes that Rowan '*was trying to set off against his own inertia someone else's positive action: mine. He wanted me to do what he could not do: help Kumar. His ideas on the subject, it goes without, saying, were woolly*' (302). So with regard to Susan's engagement Perron realizes that

Rowan had taken him to dinner at the Laytons because of '*the forthcoming marriage and the part which I might or might not play in frustrating it*' (274). At this point Rowan is the only person available who knows the full depths of Merrick's iniquity, but neither that nor his feelings for Sarah will prompt him to act. Of course he was doubtless able to excuse his passivity on the grounds of professional discretion; but, apart from the fact that he was incapable of exercising any initiative to find any other way of saving the situation, the point is that he was incapable of sufficient commitment to understand that even professional discretion was less important than the well-being of individuals who would otherwise be traduced. It was because of such impotence on the part of characters like Rowan that Merrick was able to flourish; as he had chosen Hari, so he chose the Laytons, and Rowan simply stood by and let it happen.

And to emphasize the point Scott brings in at the end the character of Laura, whom Rowan had once hoped to marry but who abandoned him for someone else. Widowed after the Japanese invasion of Malaya, she returns to India after the war and does marry Rowan; whereupon, in Mirat, Merrick seems to choose her too and visits her and gains her confidence. As it happens however Laura is as Perron puts it tougher, and instead of becoming dependent upon Merrick she becomes disgusted and tries to get away. But at this stage Rowan insists on her staying on in Mirat and, when Merrick dies, insists too on her going to the funeral '*"To remove anything that didn't fit into the picture... Of an Englishman who'd earned respect and admiration from most sections of the community."*' (544) In short, right through to the very end, Rowan needs to preserve appearances, to lend his support as he had always done even to the devil provided he was British. It was because of such complaisance that the ideals Rowan doubtless sincerely thought he believed in could never be fulfilled: the destruction we see throughout the **Quartet** is as much the responsibility of those who might have stopped it because of the vision they had and the authority they exercised as of those who wrought it. It is for this reason that I believe Scott is making a more than usually subtle point on the occasion when Rowan hears about Merrick's injury and his decoration, which will allow face to be saved and, not justice to be done for that is not possible under the circumstances, but belated orders of release -

> *"Imagine the relief with which Captain Rowan will go back to Ranpur and initiate discreet inquiries - with the Governor's approval - into the truth of what he has heard tonight. A citation for bravery and an*

amputated arm. What luck! It wipes the blot from the escutcheon and solves the problem of Mr. Merrick's future civil or military employment. The boys go free, the files are closed, and all is - as they say -as it was before. The one thing the English fear is scandal, I mean private scandal. If Mr. Merrick had ever been asked to account for his actions the outside world would never have heard of it."

"You think he had actions to account for?"

"Undoubtedly... Courage, mon ami," Bronowsky said, "le diable est mort."

Ahmed repeated the words to himself, to translate them. He smiled. "Is he?" he asked.

They waited for Rowan.(DayS: 472-3)

Yet it would not do to end on such a note of indictment, to suggest that for Scott Rowan was as much the devil as the Merrick Barbie Batchelor had identified as such. Though he was clear-sighted about the destruction that was wrought, Scott was concerned too about the opportunity that was lost, the internal failure of what he saw as the great liberal dream[11]. In giving in the first section of **A Division of the Spoils** the cynical views of the economist Purvis on the speed with which India will be given independence because it is now '*"a wasted asset"*' (31), views that Perron will repeat in the course of the book not cynically but with an awareness of the historical irony involved, Scott makes clear the betrayal of the promise for which Edwina Crane had given her life. The tragedy was that, unlike Edwina or Sarah, those in authority were incapable of an unqualified adherence to what so many of them wanted to believe in. And what Scott makes clear, in Perron's reflections on Rowan's diffidence with regard to Hari, was that because of what they withheld the tragedy was also their own -

What worried Rowan was the thought that after all his suspicion of Hari's complicity in the rape was not based so much on the evidence in the file as on the fact that Hari was an Indian and the colour of his skin coloured one's attitude to him, and that in fact it was a relief to exchange his brief, throw off the mask and let Hari condemn himself while he was trying to condemn Merrick.

And I think it was then, with Rowan sitting opposite me, showing not a trace of anxiety (carve him in stone and nothing would have emerged

so clearly as his rigid pro-consular self-assurance, remoteness and dignity) that I understood the comic dilemma of the raj - the dilemma of men who hoped to inspire trust but couldn't even trust themselves. The air around us and in the grounds of the summer residence was soft, pungent with aromatic gums, but melancholy - charged with this self-mistrust and the odour of an unreality which only exile made seem real. I had an almost irrepressible urge to burst out laughing. I fought it because he would have misinterpreted it. But I would have been laughing for him. I suppose that to laugh for people, to see the comic side of their lives when they can't see it for themselves, is a way of expressing affection for them; and even admiration - of a kind- for the lives they try so seriously to lead. (306-7)

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Book Reviews

R.K. Kaul, *Studies in William Jones: An Interpreter of Oriental Literature*, Simla : Indian Institute Advanced Studies, 1995, pp.123.

"The Orient was almost a European invention", wrote Edward Said, "and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences". Though Said's statement suggests a metaphorics of the Orient, it is meaningless in its denotational level, at least it must leave India and the Indian subcontinent aside. Said's *Orientalism* might be an European/Western experience, his notion of the Orient might have been one of Europe's deepest and recurring images of the *Other*, but the Orient as such has been an independent cultural notion at least the Indian aspect of the notion. One can understand India and Indian culture without any Foucauldian lens that Said feels useful for developing an insight. Professor Kaul in his present study has rightly challenged Said's spreading his Arabic and Islamic prejudices into the intentions of so noble and so generous a scholar like William Jones. Political ideologies do determine/influence the disciplines of knowledge, but not all and always. Kaul further points to the most precarious aspect of Said's study that the target of his wrath is neither Robert Clive nor Warren Hastings the conquerors who were the real culprits of colonialism, but against the intellectuals (whom he calls Orientalists) "Who only claimed that a knowledge of native language, customs and religious practices would make the administration more efficient." On the other hand, Kaul confidently argues that William Jones like Samuel Johnson, Edmund Burke and Charles James Fox was quite innocent of the so-called Orientalist dogma that the West is superior to the Orient in all regards. Instead of the derogatory Orientalism, Kaul prefers to ascribe Lovejoy's "Uniformitarianism" to Jones who asserted "whatever is beautiful in itself must be so in all countries and at all time." Kaul's central observation is that Jones the scholar was absolutely different from Jones the administrator. Therefore no colonialist blemish can be ascribed to him. Said's determination to find fault with Jones is only superficial and intentional - whereas the truth is that the earlier Orientalists were absolutely free from any racial or political prejudice, although some of the later Orientalists might be accused of this crime. Said's further observations in his paper "Orientalism Reconsidered" that the Orientalists understood the Orient in terms of a metaphorical feminine and that they interpreted the historical unity of humanity from the European point of view are also rejected convincingly by Kaul. In Kaul's view, Said's failure in formulating a universal Orientalism theory is due to his attempt at generalising his own Arab reaction to the formation of Israel. He has failed to note that India is a case significantly different from other Oriental countries such as Persia, Arabia, Egypt and Iraq.

Kaul's observation on Jones' sincerity as an Indologist is also supported by an American comparatist scholar Dorothy Figueira who stresses Jone's sincere love and respect for India and Indians although he consistently misunderstood certain cultural nuances and philosophical issues. Kaul's basic argument regarding Jones' sincere love for the Oriental Culture – an aesthetic approach rather than any racial or political approach – is illustrated in the chapters on Jones' interpretation and understanding of Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit poetry. Particularly the author appropriately quotes Jones' sincere adoration of the Hindu doctrines: "I am no Hindu; but I hold the doctrine of the Hindus concerning a future state to be incomparably more rational, more pious,

and more likely to deter men from vice, than the horrid opinions inculcated by Christians on punishment *without end*." (p.97)

Kaul does not question Said's intellectual popularity, but he rightly warns that this popularity should not be based on any craze for novelty. It is one thing to formulate a system of thought fitting to the current trend of scholarship, but another thing to ground it on facts and validity. Said's failure in assessing the merit of William Jones' as a sincere Orientalist is the result of his lack of patience in considering the necessary data with sufficient accuracy.

Gauri Viswanathan, *Outside the Fold : Conversion, Modernity and Belief*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998, pp. 332.

"..... the book as a whole", writes the author, "establishes the need to historicize conversion not only as a spiritual but also a political activity the narrativization of which crucially elucidates the momentous transitions to secular societies." The multidimensional insight of the writer correlates several disciplines and discourses of several genres in interpreting the events of religions conversion as essentially political rather than spiritual as it seems only in its surface level. The author must be congratulated warmly for both her powerful imagination and sophisticated critical skill. The way she handles religion, politics, laws, literature, demography, history, ethnology, sexism and colonialism is remarkable enough to asses her intellectual progress from her inaugural work *The Mask of Conquest*. On reading the book the reader is not only convinced that the religious conversion is only apparently a spiritual urge, while outside this fold the controlling force is a spectacular cultural politics, he feels also obliged to accept the author's view that the modern concept of nation and religious secularism are two opposing goals. Unless religious differences are wiped out, it is logically incompatible to count minor religious groups under a single national identity. If a nation as a political concept is based on a unique cultural identity then religion must be one among several other common signs of the same culture. Either boundaries between national and religious identity be blurred or other customary laws than the mainstream one be declared anti-national. But in reality, the political tension due to religious differences in a modern secular state is often aggravated by the fact that religion is more a category of identification than merely a subjectivity of belief. Religious secularism will therefore be meaningless as long as religion (as a system of beliefs) is considered as an independent category of identity, without its subordination to the cultural identity of the nation as a whole. A secular society must be constituted by an institutional rationality, not by any individual subjectivity.

The author's principal argument is that "conversion ranks among the most destabilizing activity in modern society, altering not only demographic patterns but also the characterization of belief as communally sanctioned to religious ideology". The questions which frame the terms of the author's inquiry are: why do the conversion movements accompany the fight against racism, sexism and colonialism? How are the struggle for basic rights and conversion linked? What are the limitations of the secular ideologies, in ensuing these rights, revealed by conversion? Does that revelation bring conversion close to cultural criticism? And does conversion offer any alternative politics of identity that crosses the traditional boundaries between communities and

identities? In the eight chapters of the book Virswanathan characterizes conversion as assimilation and dissent illustrating her ideas and observations by events and facts as diverse as Newman's conversion to Catholicism, Ramabai's conversion to and her subsequent challenge of Christianity, Annie Besant's conversion to Theosophy and Ambedkar's conversion to Buddhism. The reasons and consequences of these diverse conversions reveal various changes in political, psychological and social spheres while always displaying a political motivation in each case of these conversions. When Annie Besant's conversion, for example, has been interpreted traditionally as an act of great spiritual generosity, Viswanathan shows how outside this shift, Besant's doctrine of universal brotherhood paved the way for a commonwealth model displacing empire; how Ambedkar's conversion shapes the Indian constitution. Chapter five is particularly interesting for its illumination of the emotional responses affected by conversion as displayed in several literary works.

Viswanathan's documentation is so perfect and enlightening that sometimes the text blurs the boundaries between creative and critical narrative. Numerous facts are excavated from the neglected sources, while well known facts are re-presented with illuminating insight and perceptive correlation. The book itself inaugurates a new literacy genre indeed.

Ranajit Guha, *Dominance Without Hegemony* : History and Power in Colonial India, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997, pp.245.

The book is a collection of modified versions of the essays published during 1988-1992, first two in *Subaltern Studies* VI – VII,Delhi; and the third one in a monograph form by the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta.The Marxist perspectives of Professor Guha's thinking predominate the central arguments of the book under review. The universalist pretensions of capital is essentially responsible for the rise of colonialism in all its spheres of activities such as political ideologies, educational curricula and religious secularism. As a result, "historiography has got itself trapped in an abstract universalism.... It is important, therefore, that the critique of historiogaphy should begin by questioning the universalist assumptions of liberal ideology and the attribution of hegemony taken for granted in colonialist and nationalist interpretations of the Indian past".

Guha distinguishes between the colonial state and the metropolitan bourgeoise state, the latter being the origin of the former. Guha further distinguishes between hegemony and dominance. The bourgeois state is hegemonic the power structure of which is based on pursuasion rather than coercion. The situation is converted in the colonial state. The democratic slogan of the Western imperialists for spreading the message of equality and liberty was only a historical paradox – since in the mask of democracy the autocratic set up of the metropolitan bourgeois state propagated a new ruling class and a new ruling culture through coercion rather than pursuasion. This ruling culture, otherwise known as colonialism, is a dominance without hegemony. Guha observes that this dominance without hegemony was also predominant in the power structure of the precolonial India as also in the nationalist movement of the colonial India. Guha's masterly readings and interpretations of a vast area of material – from Kahlana to Bankim Chatterjee – reveals the cultural perspectives hitherto unknown. His argument that criticism of a particular power system comes always from outside the fold, and never evolves within, is

obviously Marxist in spirit. In this light Kahlana and Chatterjee are rightly criticized. Both of them are undoubtedly feudalists. But Guha's interpretation and appropriation of the Bhakti doctrine within the Marxist frame of knowledge is one-sided though terribly seductive. In my view, Srngara-Bhakti is never a male-dominated phenomenon even though it appears so very often – particularly in the Chaitanyite Vaishnavism. Even a cursory glance of *Gitagovinda* will contradict this notion. It is here that the Indian concept of love differs from its Troubadourian counterpart which makes Srngara-bhakti female-dominated. In *Gitagovinda* Krsna and Gopins pine for each other. If at times he deserts the milkmaids, at others, his suffering from their absence is acute. Srngara is a reciprocal behaviour. But undoubtedly, the true spirit of Bhakti was lost in the feudalist era. If the Troubadourian "domna" (the lady love) represented the feudal lord during the medieval period, so was the representation of Krsna in the philosophy and rituals of the Bengali-Vaisnavas. Most appropriately Guha exposes the misrepresentation of the Bhakti cult in the feudalist laws and administration of the precolonial and colonial India.

Similarly, one enjoys Guha's rendering the Gandhian principles of discipline, control and (self-) obedience as bourgeoise in guise and his implicit demarcation of two disciplines elite and subaltern. One remembers at this stage the most effective dramatization of the Indian history and culture by late Professor Rahul Sankrityayan in his historiographic narrative *From the Vulga to the Ganges*. If Gandhi can be interpreted as a personality claiming for hegemony through pursuasion (not coercion), and Indian nationalist movement as a bourgeoise activity with its claim for hegemony without dominance, then perhaps the whole of human activity can be divided to two major camps: dominance without hegemony, and hegemony without dominance.

C.A.Bayly, *Empire and Information*: Intelligence gathering and social communication in India, 1780-1870, Cambridge: Cambridg University Press, 1996, pp.412 (ISBN 0521 570859).

"Being dominant, of course," wrote Arnold Toynbee, "does not necessarily involve being either more numerous or more civilized." Professor Bayly's book is an excellent illustration of Toynbee's statement in its demonstration of the fact that British political intelligence was more powerful and effective rather than its military strength in spreading the imperial territory. Surveillance and communication are the maior instruments of political intelligence: "Before they could command men and money, rulers had to assemble stores of information and set up networks of communication" (P.141). It is not that the British introduced the forms of communication in India, they rather skilfully and wisely mastered and manipulated the information systems that prevailed during the Hindu and Mughal administrations for centuries before the British invaded India. Bayly studies the evolution of British intelligence gathering in India between the wars of annexation in 1793-1818 and the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 and shows how networks of Indian running-spies and political secretaries were recruited by the British to secure military, social and political information about their colonial subjects. The author notes that the British were forced to master and manipulate the information systems of their Hindu and Mughal predecessors as prevailed before 1830. Later the indigenous agencies were modified with new tasks so as to collect types of information that were different from what their predecessors needed. Public

instruction and statistical movement were set up. But the information these agencies supplied were not properly interpreted by the colonial authorities. Their misinterpretation or superficial understanding of the information they received, as also their misunderstanding of the subtlities of Indian politics and values, resulted in their failure to anticipate the Mutiny of 1857. Besides, introduction of printing press, the English language, public debate in newspapers, libraries and archives transformed Indian societies more than colonial capitalism transformed its economy. Introduction of the western scientific knowledge failed to reduce the significance of the indigenous sciences. The first two chapters of the book study in detail the impact of he indigenous information system on the colonial rulers. The third chapter shows how misinformation caused failure of the British rulers. The Chapters 7 & 8 provide excellent discussions on the subjects of astronomy, medicine, language and geography in their colonial encounters. These chapters provide not only a body of information interesting for political history of the colonial India, their magnificence lies in providing a new mode of studying historical knowledge in their dialectical and literary perspectives. The author's remark "The intellectual associations and alliances which emerged from such encounters were harbingers of an Indian nation. Indian protagonists in colonial debates were forming connections across the whole subcontinent and appealing to a national intellectual tradition two generations before indigenous political associations began to emerge" (p.247) is multiferiously meaningful in the contexts of political, social, psychological and literary transformations of the Indian intellectual tradition during the British colonization. Finally, although the book is intended as a contribution to imperial history (p.365), its contribution to colonialism in various forms of cultural studies is superb indeed.

Partha Mitter, *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India 1850-1922 : Occidental Orientations*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, reprint 1997 (ISBN 052 443547 hardbook), pp.475, plates coloured 30, black and white 190.

Mitter's book is more a work of art history than a work of history of art in modern India. The book does not merely record a history of pictorial art of India under the British colonial administration, it presents a new concept of art history that aesthetic style is not merely a conventional (E.H.Gombrich) phenomenon, much of it being determined by a strong nationalistic ideology as against the exotic influence of the coloniser's culture. Earlier than Mitter, Tapati Guha-Thakurata in her pioneering Cambridge book *The making of a New Indian Art : Artists, Aesthetics and Nationalism in Bengal, C. 1850-1920* (1992) narrated the evolution of a new "national art" from a strong protest against the introduction of European naturalism practized by Indian artists like Ravi Varma and patronized by the ruling culture. But a dominant nationalist discourse evolved in the *Swadeshi* period when the powerful wave of orientalism propelled by the thinkers like E.B. Havell, A.k. Coomaraswami, Kakuro Okakura and Bhagini Nivedita "The New School of Indian Painting" was founded by Abanindranath Tagore who rejected the European naturalism in favour of a traditional Indian symbolism in both theory and practice of pictorial art.

Mitter writes, "the consequences of westernisation were more elusive and problematic. It is this aspect of westernisation with its implications for national identity that lies at the heart of any enquiry (p.3). I prefer to focus on the relations between western art as a specific source in the colonial era, and its cultural transformations

by Indian artists – while accepting that the options before the Indian artist existed within the confines of colonial hegemony". Mitter illustrates that the "nationalist" Indian artists adopted the technological skill of the western artists such as perspective, anatomy and chiaroscuro in working out a new Indian symbolism. Abanindranath's revival of six elements (*sadanga*) of pictorial art prevalent in medieval India as mentioned by Yasodhara (13th c. A.D.) in his commentary on Vatsyayana's *Kamasutra* (3rd c. A.D.) was a historic event in the evolution of a new 'nationalist art'. Mitter deals with this aspect of modern Indian art history in the 3rd part of his book. In the final part Mitter's observation that in formulation of Indian nationalism art played a more vital role than politics coincides with Partha Chatterjee's views expressed in his *The Nation and Its Fragments* (1993). Particularly in the Indian context, aesthetic sensibility has been more powerful than political revolution. Mitter quotes Lord Ronaldshay: "a man need not be a politician to be a nationalist in the sense in which the word is defined by Mr. B.C.Pal; and the nationalism of a man who is not a politician is a thing of greater significance than that of a man who is." (p.377)

Mitter's book provides a picture of the history of modern Indian pictorial art in its informative, technical and theoretical perspectives which simultaneously define and determine the principles of modern Indian art history.

Rosemary Marangoly George, *The Politics of Home* : Postcolonial relocations and twentieth century fiction, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996 (ISBN 0521 453348 hardbook, pp.265).

"What is attempted in these pages", writes the author, "is an examination of a central aspect of the novel in English, its investment in the notion of 'home', in a project that does not restrict itself to an exclusive consideration of either 'first world', or 'third world' fictions". The author proposes a transition from English literature to literature in English and introduces a notion of global English transcending the typologies of English literature (British), American (U.S.) literature and world literature (written in or translated into English outside Britain and U.S.A.). She finally argues that in the context of global English the concept of 'home' signifies belonging – "connotes the private sphere of patriarchal hierarchy, gendered self-identity, shelter, comfort, nature and protection ..... usually represented as fixed, rooted, stable – the very anti-thesis of travel." (p.1-2) Since "home" remains the central metaphor of the study, the areas of investigation move centrifugally around the "home" – home in culture, traveling homeward and traveling out of home (countries) along with the travels of literary texts and literary theories. The dimension of the author's perception obviously demands an in-depth analysis of the conditions of modernity and nationalism inherently associated with the concept of home as she understands.

In the first chapter the author formulates three connotations of concept of the home – a 'private' space, a larger geographic place and an imagined location. The term "home-country" suggests the particular intersection of private and public, and of individual and communal as manifest in imagining a space as home. She further observes that traditional notions of nationalism "cannot fully account for the process by which diverse subjects imagine themselves at home in various geographic locations." Thus she brings together difficult

notions of nationalism and home and subjecthood as discussed in diverse kinds of discourse, finally rethinking the links between self and home in an examination of contemporary feminist theory. The second chapter applies the author's analysis of the relationship of self and home in examining some women novelists with particular reference to colonial situations of the Indian sub-continent – where a group of *Enlgish* women achieved a kind of authoritative self – "the full individual" as the desired goal of the feminism in capitalist societies. Precisely speaking, "the *English* home" in the colonies represented as an empire in miniature – and reversely, empire is represented as an expanded domestic space peopled by masters and servants. The next chapter considers Conrad's masculine representations of home and nation – considering some vital questions such as whether Conrad was an aristocrat to see all kinds of terror and domesticity in women, and as an iconoclast destroyed the bourgeois ideals of "sacred home", "chaste femininity" and "social order". May be that Conrad threatened the English of their idolized concept of England as home. But the author delinks his novels from their established banner of "Modernism" while relating them to other national writings of the English-speaking world.

The fourth chapter is a theoretical one where George examines Fredric Jameson's concept of "third world" literature as fixed in nationalist moments or nationalist texts. Differing from Jameson, the author resists the urge to be at home everywhere and insists on a revision of the western theories on postcolonial literature. In the fifth chapter Chandra Mahanty's Cartesian modulation of feminine consciousness "I write therefore I resist" is dealt with. She takes up issues other than nationalism such as home, marriage, religion, gendered subjectivity as dealt with in Indian novels in English. She argues that the western criteria of the "Third World Novel" such as national allegory, horrors of gender inequality, despair after independence are indicative of only one category of the whole mass, that is called "postcolonial". Analysing the prominent feminine novelists the author concludes that if "The Third World Novel" cannot be automatically identified as "postcolonial" women writing cannot be associated with Mahanty's modulation of the Cartesian consciousness.

The book is undoubtedly an exciting experience of the postcolonial ideologies pro and contra. Its textural sophistication explores the intricacies of the experience itself and denounces any simplification of so complicated an issue like postcolonialism in its social, political, historical, psychological, religious and aesthetical dimensions.

Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments* : Colonial and Postcolonial Histories, Princeton : Princeton University Press, 1993, pp.282.

The eleven chapters of this book are an organization of several essays published during 1988-1992. The concept of "nationalism" is entirely a product of the political history of Europe and the concept as a western gift arrived in the Third World through colonization. Benedict Anderson has (*Imagined Communities : Reflection on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London : Verso, 1983) treated the phenomenon as part of the universal history of the modern world, and has demonstrated that "nations" were not determinate products of given sociological conditions such as race, religion and language, but were *imagined* into existence. The institutional forms through which this "nation"/imagined community acquired a concrete shape is called by Anderson "print-

capitalism". The historical experience of this western nationalism supplied a set of modular forms from which the elites of Asia and Africa chose types they liked. But Chatterjee rejects the universality of Anderson's set of modular forms. He rightly asserts that "nationalism" may be defined as an imagined community; but in the Asian and African contexts, it is certainly not similar to the western forms. In its anticolonial origin nationalism in the colonized continents is sufficiently different from its western counterpart so as to affirm its independent identity. Chatterjee remarks that such a confusion as that of Anderson's is due to treating nationalism as essentially a political phenomenon. But in reality, to study the case of India, nationalism was born much earlier - in its anticolonial form – than it was politically born in the event of formation of the Indian National Congress (1885). "By my reading", Chatterjee writes, "anti-colonial nationalism creates its own domain of sovereignty within colonial society well before it begins its political battle with the imperial power." This is an observation which matches Ranajit Guha's findings: the anticolonial nationalism achieves its success by dividing the social institutions into two domains – material and spiritual. The material domain refers to the exotic elements such as technological supremacy of the colonizer, and the spiritual domain is the esoteric 'essence' of India's cultural identity. Chatterjee further articulates with an excellent precision: "The greater one's success in imitating western skills in the material domain, therefore, the greater the need to preserve the distinctions of one's spiritual culture. This formula is, I think, a fundamental feature of anticolonial nationalism in Asia and Africa." (p.6) Chatterjee exemplifies his theory from the Indian history of social reform during the nineteenth century. The social reformers of India initially sought for the administrative cooperation, but in the second phase they never allowed the colonial state to intervene in matters affecting their "national" (the inner/inside, esoteric/spiritual) culture. This reaction is the birth of Indian nationalism. But this spiritual essence was never to remain as it was centuries before. It ought to change, but not by any external (colonial) criteria, but by the criteria which are allowed by the very shaping principles of the "inner essence" without any intervention of the western modular forms. Indian "nation" is undoubtedly an "imagined community" like any other nation but imagined not by any external agency or through any western modulars. It is imagined purely by its own people following the modular forms as approved by their own internal cultural tradition. "If the nation is an imagined community, then this is where it is brought into being. In this, its true and essential domain, the nation is already sovereign, even when the state is in the hands of the colonial power. The dynamics of this historical project is completely missed in conventional histories in which the story of nationalism begins with the contest for political power." (p.6)

Chatterjee then proceeds on to identify and analyse the major inner areas of national culture which underwent modifications during this rise of the esoteric nationalism --such as art, language, family and religion. Tapati Guha - Thakurata and Partha Milter have dealt with the issue of Indian art and nationalism in their recent Cambridge publications (q.v.). As it appears in all these areas what the nationalists (middle class elite) strongly opposed is the western (colonial) misunderstanding of the inner spiritual essence of Indian culture as barbaric and monstrous – temples, images, religious rites, role and place of women in families. The fifth chapter titled "The Nationalist" contains an excellent probe into the nationalist experience of the notable saint

of this crucial period Sri Ramakrishna at Dakhineswar. This chapter exposes the author's most perceptive insight though not always uncontroversial. In analysing Mahendranath Gupta's most memorable records of Sri Ramakrishna's dialogues, Chatterjee displays his hermeneutic skill par excellence. One is automatically impressed by the author's introduction of a new mode of reading the colonial texts – reading the tension of domination and submission, strategy of survival in a world dominated by the rich and powerful, symbolic approach to woman and wealth, the difference between written prose and colloquial dialogues, reverence for the past as a strong nationalist criterion to count a few only in Chatterjee's reading of the *Kathamrita*.

The book is symbolic of a new mode of enquiry into the interrelated areas of humanities – literature, art, politics, sociology and religion. Chatterjee deserves our sincere compliments for his outstanding contribution to the significant genre of postcolonial studies.

A.C. Sukla

Rukun Advani, *Indian History from Above and Below* : Two Academic Parodies, Lucknow : Ram Advani, 1993. pp.20.

Indian historians as a category is non-existent if one chooses to forget the Bengali intellectuals. Or at least that is what some of the non-Bengali men of letters think, the Bengalis believe. Quite a few of these pundits living outside Bengal also think another thought. It is that the fish-loving learned men from Eastern India have a preference for the verbal mode, or who else is there to preserve the sacred Indian oral tradition ? And the medium is unmistakably native. (The disappearance of the English language from certain stages of school curriculum in Bengal is continuous with this general inclination of the wise *Bhadralok* towards things *swadeshi*). But material compulsions including a duty towards the coffers of the publishers create the need for dissemination and finally print. The vernacular medium not being able to rise to the occasion gives way to the colonial language with its choking jargons and pathologically unavoidable appendage of foot notes, as that is what bamboozles the reading public and sells.

Something to this effect Rukun Advani says in the present pamphlet. He launches a vitriolic attack on the arm-chair intellectuals, particularly from Bengal, ' Whose dollar salaries rise in proportion with obscurity and jargon'. Advani in a bid to trash the present-day sociological research and field- study makes a pun on the term 'field', which also evokes the idea of the field as an open-air lavatory for the toiling masses in India. He claims to concern himself with their public act of toileting rather than their private one of toiling, as the basic functions of the underdogs are left unresearched by the scholars despite their panchant for 'difficult' tasks such as investigating the ordinary day to day life of the subalterns amid great violence to the olfactory. Through this earthy or '*lota-pani* view from below' Advani gives us an insight into the conditions governing the subaltern's literal and symbolic easing of himself, and into his ironic 'autonomy from the olfactory', that makes him unresponsive to his own smell, to his own plight. On the other hand, the uncertain and ambiguous position of the sociologist leaves him curiously tortured by the order of the native, but not sufficiently touched to come out of the closet for any purpose other than field-study.

Using physiognomic metaphors and allegorising the quotidian functions of the human/bovine private organs Advani mounts a caustic offensive against the fruitless work of the intellectual on the one hand and the upcoming peasant, who imitates his own master while dealing with one of his own clan pushed into subordination by a difference of gender on the other.

In the second part of the pamphlet Advani takes an aerial view of Indian history, so that the focus is on the cultural elites. He deflates the myth of Bankim as a semiotic signifier of the oppressed native in general through playful distortions of the name 'Bankim' keeping in mind the Bengali accent, the colonial habit to bonk him (the native), and the gender-neutral Anglo-colonial word "Bankam".

Even the critics of Bankim are not spared. Advani comes down heavily on the fashion of Bankim-bashing in modern Bengal, and also on the tendency among Indian intellectuals to give a post-colonial twist to every reading of Indian history, going as far as involving the dead in their 'spirited defense' against the colonial domination. He questions the habit of seeing the role of the colonial phallus at every turn of Indian history or in every instance of violence on the native body. He conveys all this through a snide and hilarious parody.

Gyan Prakash, ed., *After Colonialism*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995, pp. 352.

In view of the wide impact of the colonial experience on historical, cultural and literary studies, the Shelby Cullom Davis centre for Historical Studies, Princeton University organized a chain of seminars and symposia during the period-1990–1992–on "Imperialism, Colonialism, and the Colonial Aftermath" with the express purpose of offering a fresh approach to the history of colonialism and its effects on forms of knowledge. The resultant papers were later put together in the form of a book under the title *After Colonialism* published by the Princeton University Press in 1995.

The selection of papers is perhaps aimed at giving print space to the representative essays dealing with particular colonial experiences from different parts of the globe, with the editor trying to do the stitching job by means of a thread of the same old post-colonial theories. The native acting as a defining instrument through his difference, the self/ other dichotomy, the polarity of order and chaos, the colonizer presenting himself as the "unconscious tool of history", then "questioning of the idea of history as history" and a need to recognize the existence of another history of agency and knowledge are some of the stock ideas the editor draws upon to execute his purpose. Sprinklings of Gandhi with his prescription of a return to the village community, his idea of non-modern civilization, and Fanon with his trembling and suffering yet frightening nigger complete editorial stock-in-trade.

The first essay is by Edward Said, which explodes the myth of comparative literature providing a transnational perspective on literary performance, revealing the centrality of Latin Christian literatures in its assumption. Said points out the affiliation of fields like Comparative Literature, English studies, Anthropology and Cultural Studies to the empire and sees the beginning of a contrapuntal re-reading of the cultural archives, of a time to put an end to the western practice of isolating the cultural and aesthetic from the worldly domain. Finally he attacks the demystifying discursive practices like Marxism and Deconstruction for avoiding the most powerful political presence of modern times namely imperialism.

Fierman underscores the impossibilitiy of recounting history as a single story from a single perspective. He builds his arguments about the ingenuity of constructing a narrative of world history with an awareness of the existence of non-European experiences, on a rebuttal of Fernand Braudel's unidirectional history of the world with an underlying European master narrative. He acknowledges the advent of an era that makes an epistemological crisis in all the disciplines, a crisis born of the voiceless getting back his voice, a crisis resulting from a hither to mute and inert people beginning to be seen as speaking and acting.

Joan Dayan in his eassy looks at Haitian revolution from a new angle by re-reading its history. This new reading of Haitian history asserts a hybridity through a negation of the black/white polarity, while Ruth Philips draws attention to the silence of the North American museums on the native American tourist art and on the native people's contemporary life styles. Anthony Pagden discusses at length the views of Diderot and Herder on colonialism, which they see as an attempt to abolish cultural pluralities, to minimise the number of cultural variants in the world. They think, moral corruption begins with travel, as it is the first step towards the violation of nature's intentions.

Leonard Blasse and Gauri Viswanathan are pre-occupied with the question of conversion. For Blasse it is a way of copying with cultural difference, whereas Viswanathan reveals a complicity between conversion and colonialism, which renders the converted voiceless. She finds an erasure of the convert's subjectivity as a result of this process. Because the subjective religious experience of the converted is negated by allowing the legislated religious identity to take precedence over it through the British legal judgement that protects the property rights of the converts in their original community. Zachari Lockman deals with the problematic relationship between socialism and nationalism while analysing the history of labour zionism, which is ultimately seen to have an underlying colonialist orientation.

J. George Klor de Alva writes the last essay in the second part of this volume, which discusses the problem of cultural difference in the context of colonialism. Alva shows how the Europeanized mestizos tried to present national independence as decolonization, while the indigenous inhabitants are yet to be decolonized; and how the European immigrants tried to usurp the position of the natives and the nativist ideology vis-à-vis British colonialism marginalizing the actual natives.

The last part of this volume deals with forms of knowledge and agency that is a direct consequence of displacements spawned by the colonial discourse itself. Irene Silverblatt sees the emergence of subaltern agency in the growth of heretics and witches, the interface of which is a colonial panic.

Emily Apter's essay through a discussion of Elisa Rhais's novels travesties the colonial stereotypes thereby robbing them of the expected meanings. It dwells on the deconstruction of the colonial realism in a context that produced a clash of realism creating possibilities for recognizing the existence of alternative agency in the post-colonial scenario. Apter reveals the erasure of contradictions between global pan-feminism and colonialism at a point where first world feminism instrumentalizes colonial stereotypes in its attempt to present "third world woman" as a negated subjectivity.

Homi Bhabha seems to do a summing up at the end as he makes the primary issues of this volume converge while locating the subaltern agency in the intermediate space between knowledge and reality. The agency that he outlines is contingent and ambivalent and not deterministic and homogenous. He brings us to a notion of the colonial aftermath which lies on the border between the inside and the outside of colonial norms.

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